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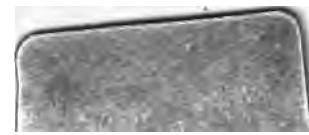

BARBARA'S HISTORY.

VOL. II.

BARBARA'S HISTORY.

BY

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"MY BROTHER'S WIFE," "HAND AND GLOVE,"
"THE STORY OF CERVANTES,"
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BARBARA'S HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

A WELCOME VISITOR.

He took my hands in his, and led me to the window.

"What, Barbara?" said he. "Little Barbarina, who climbed a certain library window one fine afternoon, and rode home upon Satan! By my soul, I can hardly believe it."

"Believe or disbelieve as you will, Sahib," I replied, half-laughing, half-crying; "it is none the less true."

"I suppose not," he said, seriously. "I suppose not. There could scarcely be two Barbarinas in so small a world as this! And then to find you here—here, of all nooks and corners in Europe! Why, I should as soon have thought of meeting

you 'where the Chineses drive their cany waggons light!' So tall, too—so clever—such a capital artist! *Peste!* the sight of you makes me feel a dozen years younger. How long is it, *carina*, since you and I were at Broomhill together?"

"I left Stoneycroft Hall," sighed I, "just six years and three months ago."

"It seems like six centuries. I have been from Dan to Beersheba in the meantime; and I cannot say that I am much the better for it—whilst you .... by the by, you always had a taste for art. Do you remember choosing the best drawing in my sketch-book, Barbara? And do you remember how I unpacked the Paul Veronese for your connoisseurship's special delectation?"

"Indeed, yes—and I also remember how that same picture very nearly proved your death."

"Shade of Polyphemus, and so do I! A little more, and I should have been crushed as flat as Acis, without even a Galatea to weep for me. Poor old Paolo! Heaven grant that mine ancestral rats have not quite eaten him up by this time. But, Barbarina, how came you here? And why? Have you adopted art as a profession? What are your plans, prospects, and so forth? Why, you have a thousand things to tell me."

"Not half so many as you have to tell me, Mr. Farquhar. From Dan to Beersheba is a journey

worth relating, and you must have had many adventures by the way."

"As many as the Knight of La Mancha! As many as Don Diego, on his road to and from the Promontory of Noses! As many as any Sir Galahad that ever sat in the Siege Perilous, or brake bread at Arthur's round table! But let my stories lie and rust awhile longer, Barbarina. They are scarcely worth the breath it costs to tell them. Sit down here, instead, and talk to me. Tell me all that has happened, and what your life has been since we parted."

"Will you answer me one question first?"

"Willingly—if I can."

"How long is it since you left Broomhill? Did you often see my aunt after I was gone? Did she miss me? Was she sorry for me? Did she never speak of me, or think of me again? Why did she not write to me after I went home? What had I done that she should utterly abandon me?"

"My child, instead of one question, here are a dozen; none of which I can satisfactorily answer. In the first place, I do not even know in what month you went away."

"In May."

"And I in September. In the second place, I never saw Mrs. Sandyshaft more than twice during that time. It was my own fault, and I was a fool

for my pains. I behaved like an uncivilised savage; played with edged tools; very nearly fell into the hands of a female Philistine; discovered my error before it was too late, and fled the country. Pshaw! you remember her, Barbara?"

"Lady Flora . . . ." I faltered.

"Now Countess of somewhere or another, with a castle in the west of England and a husband as old as Methusaleh! Well, to return to Mrs. Sandyshaft—I saw her but twice. Once soon after you left, and again when I called to bid her good-bye, the night before I started for the East."

"And what did she say of me?"

"Very little the first time, and nothing the second."

"Did she know that Papa had sent us to Germany?"

"I fancy not. I think she would have told me, had she known it."

"Do you think she missed me?"

"I am sure of it—the surer, because she never said a word about it. Janet missed you sadly, and cried when she heard your name."

"Poor Janet!"

"For my own part, Barbara, I felt as if the house were not the same place at all. The daylight seemed to have gone out of it, and silence to have settled on it like a spell. When I was shown

into the old familiar parlor, and saw your aunt in her old familiar place, and looked round for you as usual, and then heard that you were gone—gone right away never to return—I felt .... by Jove, I felt as if a cold hand had been laid upon my heart!"

"Oh, Mr. Farquhar, did *you* miss me also?"

"Miss you? My little girl, I could not have missed you more had I .... *Parbleu!* it was for that I staid away. Do you suppose I would not have spent many an hour with the old lady in her solitude, had I not been a selfish monster and hated to go near the place? And so you have never seen her since?"

"Never."

"Nor heard from her?"

I shook my head.

"And you do not even know whether she is alive or dead?"

"I have seen my father; and he says that she is living."

"But why not write to her?"

"I cannot. I loved her, as though she were my mother, and her house was more to me than home had ever been. She exiled me from herself and from all that made me happy, and .... and I cannot write to her now—I cannot write to her now!"

He shrugged his shoulders, and looked as people look when they blame you and refrain from saying so.

"Well, well," said he, "we will talk this over some day! In the meantime, Barbarina, tell me something of yourself. Tell me what has become of the wild, bright-eyed little girl whom I once knew at Broomhill, and what possible affinity can exist between her and you?"

I took the chair he placed for me, and obeyed him as literally, and in as few words as I could. I went back to that darkest day in all my calendar, when my aunt told me I must leave her. I recalled my weary journey home, and how I found my sister Jessie dead. I sketched the circumstances of my arrival in Germany; the routine of my school life; the growth of my taste for art; and all that I thought could interest or amuse him, down to my father's second marriage, and the departure of my sister Hilda for Paris. He listened attentively; sometimes interrupting me with exclamations, and sometimes with questions. When I had done, he pushed his chair away, and paced restlessly about the room.

"Strange!" said he, more to himself than me. "Strange, how all things shape themselves to the ends of genius! The old, new story, over and over again! The old, new story of how heartbreak,

and exile, and neglect develope the nature of the artist, and arm him for his future career. Tush, Barbara, you may congratulate yourself upon your troubles! Had you vegetated till now in the bucolic atmosphere of Stoneycroft Hall, you had never carried off a gold medal or painted Rienzi in the ruins of the Forum!"

"Perhaps not," I replied sadly; "but then my childhood would have been cared for, and the first impulses of my heart would not have faded among strangers. I should have known the happiness of home, and . . . ."

My voice failed, and I broke off abruptly. He finished my sentence for me.

"And, like a foolish virgin, you regret the good the Gods have sent you! Pshaw, child, beware of these longings—beware of such empty words as home, or love, or friendship. They mean nothing —worse than nothing—disappointment, bitterness of soul, restlessness, despair! Forget that you have a heart, or begin life afresh with the determination to regard it merely as a useful muscle employed in the circulation of the blood. Steel yourself to this, and you may have some chance of happiness in the future. Devote yourself to your art. Make it your home, your country, your friend. Wed it; live in it; die for it; shut your eyes and your ears against all else; and if ever a fool comes talk-

ing love to you, laugh at him for his pains, and bid him 'go a bat-fowling!'"

"And if I cannot do all this? If the humanity that is in me demands something more than paint and canvas—what then?"

"What then? Why, shipwreck, child. Shipwreck on the deep sea, without a compass, without a morrow, without a hope."

There was a fierce and bitter regret in his voice, that struck me like a revelation.

"You speak as one who has suffered," I said, almost without intending it.

He smiled drearily.

"I speak," said he, "as one who has tried all things, and eaten of the Dead Sea apples—as one who, having wealth, is poor, and, having a home, is homeless! As one, Barbara, to whom 'this goodly frame, the earth,' seems but a sterile promontory, and this 'brave o'erhanging firmament no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours!' But this is nonsense. *Parlons autre chose!*"

"If I dared," said I sadly, "I would ask you to talk to me of yourself alone; but . . . ."

"But you are too young to be my confidante, Barbara—too young—too innocent, too hopeful. Nay, it is useless to ask—Heaven forfend that I

should burden your memory with the record of my faults and follies!"

I had no reply for this, and a long silence followed, during which he continued to pace to and fro, with his hands clasped behind his back and his eyes fixed gloomily upon the ground. For the first time since our meeting, I found myself at liberty to observe him closely. He was but little changed, if at all. Somewhat browner, perhaps; somewhat broader and more vigorous; but the same Hugh Farquhar, every inch! If the lines of the mouth seemed to have grown sterner and the brow more thoughtful, six years of travelling were sufficient to account for it; but would they also account for that deeper fire, so weary, wistful and consuming, that burned in his dark eyes, like the flame of a smouldering volcano? He had asked me what my life was since we parted: I asked myself what had been his? A thousand questions started to my lips; but I dared not utter one. I longed to ask him why he had again wandered away from Broomhill; where he had been travelling; whence he came; and whither he was going. I longed, also, to tell him that I kept his silver ring, and had kept it, ever since, as a sacred relic; but a strange reluctance tied my tongue, and kept me silent. In the midst of my reverie,

he looked up suddenly and found me watching him.

"Barbara," said he, "you think me a strange being; fitful, perverse, good for nothing! Well, you are right; and if I puzzle you, I puzzle myself as much, and more. Some day or another, when you and I are both older and wiser, I will tell you the story of my inner life from first to last—if only to show you how a man may gamble away Heaven's precious gifts, and find himself, at thirty-four, bankrupt of all that makes the future not wholly desperate!"

"Bankrupt!" I faltered, bewildered by his vehemence, and fearing I knew scarcely what.

"Pshaw, child, bankrupt in hopes—not acres!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "What is life but a game of chance, and what are we but the players? We stake on the future—it may perhaps be a prize; perhaps a blank. Who knows till the card turns up, or the ball has done rolling?"

"I cannot bear that you should feel thus," I said, the tears starting to my eyes. "You are still young—you are rich—you might make yourself and so many others happy; and yet . . ."

"And yet, Barbara, I envy you with my whole soul!"

"Envy me, Mr. Farquhar?"

"Aye, as Edmund envied Edgar! When I

came to-day into the calm atmosphere of this house,—when, being conducted through yonder corridor, I passed an open door, and saw some twenty young girls sitting round a table with their books and samplers, all industrious, innocent, and happy—when I was shown into this pleasant, simple parlour, with its matted floor and open window, and flower-laden balcony—when I see you in that plain brown gown and snowy collar, looking so good and purposeful, and working out the problem of a studious and ennobling career; when I see all this, Barbara, and compare it with my wandering, aimless, hopeless, futile life, I envy you and such as you, and wish myself something worthier—or something worse—than I am! Nay—do not interrupt me. I know what you would say. I know all that can be said upon the subject—but I am too old now to turn the current of my ways!"

"You are unjust to yourself," I suggested, scarcely knowing what to reply. "He who travels much, learns much; and I can conceive nothing finer than the life of one who studies history from the ruins of Greece and Rome, geology from the mountains and mines, and human nature from association with all the races of mankind."

He laughed, or forced a laugh; and, taking a volume of Bacon from the table, read aloud—

"'*Travel in the younger sort is a part of educa-*

tion; in the elder, a part of experience'—why, Barbarina, you are a Verulam in petticoats! Now, look you, I am of the 'elder' sort, and travel is not only a part of my experience, but all my experience. For more than twelve years I have been wandering about the world, and what do you suppose I have learnt for my pains?"

"I should exceedingly like to know."

"In the first place, then, I am convinced that English ale is better drinking than train-oil; and that Burgundy and Bordeaux are better than either."

"I think I could have told you that, without going from Dan to Beersheba, Mr. Farquhar."

"Miss Churchill, you are satirical! In the second place, I have come to the conclusion that the world really is a round world, and not a flat surface with the Celestial Empire in the midst."

"Amazing discovery!"

"Be pleased not to interrupt the court. And in the third place, madam, I am persuaded that it is my destiny to dangle about diligences, be a perigrinator in post-chaises, and a diner at table d'hôtes throughout the term of my natural life. Surely this is experience and wisdom enough for one mortal man, and as much as my worst enemies have a right to expect from me!"

With this he snatched up his hat, and pointed to the time-piece on the mantel-shelf.

"I have been here an hour and a half," he exclaimed. "If I make my visits too long, the Academic powers will, perhaps, have the bad taste to object. Adieu, Barbarina. I shall come again soon."

"Do you remain long at Zollenstrasse?"

"*Chi lo sa?* Yes—no—perhaps. 'Tis as the fancy takes me, and the mood lasts. Farewell!"

He shook hands; hesitated a moment, as if doubtful whether I were too old to be kissed; laughed; drew back; and throwing wide the window, which opened on a balcony only three or four feet from the ground, leaped lightly down into the courtyard, without troubling himself to go round by the corridors, and out at the front entrance, like a respectable and orderly visitor. At the gate he turned again, waved his hand, and was gone in a moment.

I hastened to the solitude of my room, locked the door, and sat on the side of my bed for a long time, thinking of many things. Was I happy? or sorrowful? or both? I know not—I only know that when I was summoned down to supper, I heard one of my schoolfellows whisper to her neighbour:—

"Look at Barbara's eyes. She has been crying. The dark stranger from England brought bad news to-day!"

CHAPTER II.

I SHINE WITH A REFLECTED LUSTRE.

THE competition over, Zollenstrasse subsided into its normal state of semi-fashionable quiet. The King of Würtemberg drove away in a barouche and four, preceded by his outriders and followed by three carriages containing his *suite*. The other illustrious visitors, with the exception of a few who remained to drink the waters, departed with more or less of magnificence to their several destinations. The paintings and casts came back to the studios; the benches and red hangings were cleared out of the Assembly room; the theatre, which for a whole week had been crowded every night, was advertised, as usual, for Sundays and Wednesdays only, and the waiters might once more be seen loitering with their hands in their pockets at the doors of the hotels. In the Academy, an un-

natural calm succeeded to an unwonted confusion. The present was the long vacation, when every one, save a melancholy minority, packed up and went joyously away. Hilda and I, Ida Saxe, and one or two others, were among those who always stayed behind. Now Hilda, too, was gone, and the great building was more desolate than ever. Had it not been for Hugh, my triumph, after all, would have been a sad one.

Still it was a triumph; and my heart throbbed with pleasure when my companions thronged about me that Sunday evening, asking to see my medal—my beautiful golden medal, in its case of morocco and velvet. I even went to sleep with it under my pillow that first night; and looked at it, I need hardly say, as soon as I opened my eyes in the morning.

"You will be made a sub-professor, now, Barbara," said one.

"And take out a double first-class certificate, when you leave the College!" added another.

"And sit at Madame Brenner's right hand at table and at chapel," said a third.

All of which came to pass; for at supper that very same night, I was installed in the seat of honour; and next day received my appointment as sub-professor, with a salary of two hundred florins per annum. Nor was this all. Professor

Metz, the critical, the formidable, he who never praised or pitied, summoned me a few days later to his private studio, and graciously proclaimed his intention of employing me to assist him, during the vacation, in painting the panels of the Grand Duke's summer-pavilion. I confess that I was more elated by this mark of distinction than by any other of my successes. Of course I wrote to Hilda by the first post, and filled four large pages of letter-paper with details of the Competition, not forgetting my own good fortune. I omitted, however, though I scarcely knew why, all mention of Farquhar of Broomhill.

The school was nearly empty when he next came to see me, and Madame Brenner, who was somewhat scandalised by the manner of his departure on the first occasion, received him in her own parlour, and remained there till he left. When he was gone, she said—

"Your friend, Barbara, is a very strange person."

To which I replied:—

"Strange, Madame?"

"Is it his custom to prefer the window to the door, when he leaves a house?"

"He—he has been a great traveller, Madame," I stammered. "He has eccentricities. He...."

"Have you known him long?"

"Since I was a little girl, Madame."

"And his profession?"

"He is a gentleman, Madame—a *propriétaire*—very rich—a connoisseur of the fine arts."

"Evidently a connoisseur," said Madame. "I should have supposed him, from his conversation, to be a painter."

Here our little colloquy ended; but Madame Brenner was not quite at ease upon the subject of my English visitor. That any man should run, when he might walk; jump from a window, when he might go round by a door; stand up and pace about a room, when he might sit in a chair; and travel about the world, when he might live at home in a chateau of his own, were peculiarities entirely beyond the radius of her comprehension. All that he said, all that he did, was at variance with her German decorum; and henceforth she made a point of being present at our interviews. One day, however, when we were walking along the Weimar Strasse, we met the royal *cortége* face to face, with Hugh riding beside the Grand Duke, in familiar conversation. He took off his hat first to Madame, and then to me. I observed that this incident produced a deep impression on her.

"Your friend is a man of rank?" said she, interrogatively, when the Ducal party was out of sight.

"No, Madame."

She looked perplexed.

"Of high position, then?"

"He is a gentleman, Madame, of ancient family."

"And enormously rich?"

"No, Madame—not rich for an English *propriétaire*. He has about a hundred and fifty thousand florins a year."

This was a piece of malice on my part; for the Grand-Ducal revenue amounted to about one third of the sum, perquisites included. Poor Madame Brenner murmured "*Mein Gott!*" sighed meekly, looked more perplexed than before, and was silent during the rest of the walk.

A day or two after this, one of the girls showed me his name in the Zollenstrasser Zeitung. He had been dining with the Duke and Duchess, and was written down an "Excellency."

"He must be a very great man," said she.

"He is a very wonderful man," I replied. "He has been all over the world. He speaks as many languages as you have fingers on your hands. He has a horse that kneels down to let him mount; and a black valet who saved his life from the bite of a serpent in India. He has a house four times as big as the Ducal Residenz; and a park larger than the woods of Brühl; and some years ago he

bought a Paul Veronese, for which he gave thirty thousand florins."

"*Wunderbar!* And with all this he has no title?"

"None at all."

"And is not even a Geheimrath?"

"Nothing of the kind, dear. Nothing but an English gentleman, *pur et simple*."

I did not think it necessary to say that we deemed that the better title of the two.

These things created an immense excitement in the Academy. Those few pupils who remained behind were very inquisitive about the marvellous Englishman, and listened eagerly to all that I could be brought to tell them on the subject. Whatever I said was repeated, with exaggerations, to Madame Brenner; Madame Brenner communicated it, with placid amazement, to the resident professors; the professors carried the news to all the æsthetic teas in Zollenstrasse; and Hugh Farquhar became the Monte Christo of the day. In the meantime, I shone with a reflected lustre, and was almost more revered by my fellow-students for my friend than for my medal.

Still, he came but seldom. Sometimes I met him going out of the public library, with a book under his arm. Sometimes I saw his horse and groom waiting before the door of his hotel. And

one morning he came armed with an order to see the College, on which occasion Madame Brenner, whose respect and perplexity were ever on the increase, informed me that the Herr Excellency was an extraordinary man, and made extraordinary observations about everything!

CHAPTER III.

THE GRAND DUKE'S SUMMER PAVILION.

THE Grand Duke's summer pavilion was in shape an oblong parallelogram, built in imitation of the celebrated Casino Rospigliosi. The façade was encrusted with tasteful bas-reliefs, and the interior divided into panelled compartments, filled alternately with mirrors and paintings. The old designs, of a bastard Watteau school, had been lately removed; and Professor Metz was replacing them by subjects descriptive of German life and landscape. His plan was to "lay in" the broad effects of each picture, and then leave me to carry it forward, guided by a small original sketch. When I had done as much as he deemed necessary, he took it in hand again, and finished it. Thus the work progressed rapidly.

One morning, when the Professor had gone home to lunch, and I was painting alone, Ida came in with a letter in her hand. She was flushed with running, and sat down, quite out of breath, in an old fauteuil in the middle of the room.

"I saw by the post-mark," said she, "that it came from Paris, and I knew by the writing that it was a letter from Hilda; so I put on my hat, and brought it directly. I have also brought you a roll, and some slices of liver-sausage! I was sure you must be hungry, and equally sure that you would never take the trouble to come back for the college dinner."

"Thanks, Ida dear. I believe I really am hungry; but it is so tiresome to go all the way back to College, across that wearisome Hof-garten in the broiling sun, and . . . ."

"Nonsense! Genius must eat. No, Barbara—roll and sausage first, and letter afterwards!"

"Nay, please let me have my letter!"

"Not till you have eaten!"

"Tyrant! How can I eat while you keep me in suspense? Remember, I have not heard from Hilda since I wrote to tell her that I had the medal!"

Ida gave it, with a kiss.

"There," said she, "you are always to be spoiled! I shall amuse myself by looking at the pictures.

What a charming place this would be for a studio!"

I broke the seal eagerly, and read my letter.

"My dearest Barbara," wrote Hilda, "Paris delights me more every day. I cannot tell you how happy I am. My life is a perpetual *fête*. Every day we drive out and pay visits; and every evening is devoted to society. Mamma receives once a week, and, as she knows only *the best people*, our circle is of the most unexceptionable kind. Last evening we went to a ball at the Tuileries. I wore white lace over white *gros de Naples*, and mamma white lace over blue satin. The President received his guests, standing. He is a cold, resolute-looking man, of about the middle height. He bears himself like a soldier, and looks taller than he is. He and Prince Napoleon strolled about the ball-room in the course of the evening. He was very polite to mamma, whose first husband, I find, held some appointment which brought him into communication with the French government. She presented me; and, later in the evening, I had the honour of dancing with Prince Napoleon. I was engaged for that dance, as it happened, to the Count de Chaumont; but a royal invitation supersedes every other, so I danced the next quadrille with the Count instead. The Count de Chaumont and papa are old acquaintances, and knew

each other years ago in Brussels, before the Count had succeeded to his title. He is a highly distinguished man, still handsome, and very dignified. He holds an important office in the royal household, and admires me *most particularly*. Indeed, my dear sister, you would be surprised to see how I am flattered and *fêted* wherever I go. The Count told papa last night that I was the belle of the season. I have been taking riding-lessons, and next week am to ride with papa in the *Bois*. He says I shall create an immense sensation *en Amazone;* and Mrs. Churchill, who no longer rides on horseback, has given me her habit, which, with certain alterations, fits me to perfection. In short, I never was so happy. I cannot understand how I lived through the monotony of our life at Zollenstrasse; and the mere recollection of that weary College overwhelms me with *ennui*. I ought not to forget, however, that I owe my knowledge of singing to Professor Oberstein; and my singing is one of my successes. I should tell you of an exquisite compliment paid to me the other day by Monsieur de B——, the celebrated historian. 'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'the race of Churchill is fatal to our nation; and I foresee that you are destined to carry still farther the conquests which your ancestor began.' And now, my dear Barbara, adieu. This is a long letter, and must con-

tent you for some weeks; for my life is a perpetual engagement, and I never have an hour that I can call my own. Mamma desires her love to you. Papa is gone to call on the Count de Chaumont, or he would doubtless desire some message. Once more, adieu, dear sister, and believe me, &c., &c., &c."

I read it to the end, and sat silent.

"Well, Barbara," cried Ida, "what does she say to your success? How did your father receive it? Oh, I wish I had been there when they opened the letter!"

"Hilda says nothing at all about it," replied I, trying to look indifferent.

"Nothing at all?" repeated Ida. "But you wrote the day after the competition—you wrote on purpose!"

"Quite true."

"Then the letter miscarried?"

I shook my head.

"But—but are you *sure* she does not mention it?" persisted Ida.

I folded the letter, and put it in my pocket.

"Hilda names the College but once," said I, "and then only to wonder how she could have endured it so long. She never mentions the competition."

"Unkind! ungenerous!" exclaimed Ida, passionately. "If I were in your place . . . ."

"If you were in my place, dear, you would forgive it as I forgive it—forget it, as I shall try to forget it; and . . . and . . . ."

"And become famous in spite of them!" cried the warm-hearted little Bavarian, throwing her arms about my neck. "Yes, Barbara, you shall force them to care for it! You shall force them to be proud of you! Think of the future that lies before you. Think of all that you have already done—think of all that you have yet to do. What matter if Hilda is careless of your success—Hilda or anyone—so long as the success is fairly achieved? Come, cheer up! Let us forget all about the letter and think only of this exquisite panel with the vintagers in the foreground!"

Saying thus, she took my hands in hers, and dragged me playfully back to my work. But the charm of the task was gone. The colour that I had laid in half an hour ago looked muddy and indecisive, and I effaced my morning's labour at the first touch.

"Oh, Barbara!" cried my friend. "All those lovely vine-leaves sacrificed!"

"And quite rightly," said a voice at the door.

It was Professor Metz, returning from his one o'clock dinner. He wore a round straw-hat and a holland coat, and carried a red umbrella to shade him from the sun.

"And quite rightly," he repeated, walking straight up to the picture, umbrella and all. "I had a vast mind to draw my brush across them before I went out; but I thought it best to let Mademoiselle make the discovery herself."

"What discovery, mein Professor?" said Ida, timidly. "They were very like."

"*Too* like, Fräulein."

"Too like, mein Professor?"

"Yes. Too laboured, too literal, too minute. Flowers, young ladies, should be treated like heads —with character and freedom. Compare the leaves which were painted here just now with that Van Huysum that you had in the class-room last spring. The one is a Denner; the other a Titian!"

Having said this, he laid aside the hat and umbrella, seized his own brushes, and plunged into his work. A dead silence followed. The Professor never spoke when he was painting, and so hated interruption that we often worked on for hours in the pavilion without exchanging a syllable. Presently Ida rose, and went quietly away; and then nothing was audible save the moist dragging of our brushes, the humming of the insects outside, and the distant rumble of an occasional vehicle.

Hilda's letter had pained me more than I cared

to confess. It came between me and my work, and I could not banish it. I felt that I was very lonely, and I knew that I must accept my solitude sooner or later. Then Hugh's bitter warning came back to my memory, as if written there in letters of fire. "Beware of such empty words as home, or love, or friendship. Devote yourself to your art. Make it your home, your lover, your friend. Live in it—die for it." Alas! were they really "empty words?" Must I, indeed, make up my mind to the barrenness of life, and forget that I have a father, a sister, and a home?

Profoundly dejected, I painted on, effacing each touch as soon as made, and pausing every now and then for very lassitude. Startled from one of these pauses by the pressure of a heavy hand upon my shoulder, I found the Professor standing by my side.

"What is the matter, Fräulein?" he asked, bending a searching glance upon me. "Why do you weep?"

"I am not weeping, sir."

He touched my cheek significantly. It was wet with unconscious tears.

"I—I did not know—I am not well," I stammered.

He shook his head.

"You are not happy," he said, with unusual

gentleness. "There—put away your work for to-day. One cannot paint when the mind is out of tune."

"I am very sorry . . . ."

"Nay, you will do better to-morrow. Have you bad news from home?"

"No, mein Professor."

"What is it, then? Come, Fräulein, tell me your trouble and let me help you, if I can."

"You cannot help me," I said, brokenly. "You are very kind, but . . . ."

The Professor frowned, and shook his head again.

"Fräulein Barbara," said he, "you have common sense. Yours is not a merely sentimental trouble. You are not one of those young ladies who think it pleasant to be melancholy, and cry for want of something better to do. You have a grief. Well, fight through it alone, if you are able. You will be all the wiser and stronger hereafter. But if you want counsel, or help, or anything that I can give you, come to me."

Greatly touched by this unusual *démarche* on the part of our terrible Professor, I tried to express my thanks; but he stopped me at the first word.

"Hush, hush, nonsense!" said he abruptly. "Put away your work. Put away your work, and go for a walk. Make haste, and leave me in peace."

I made what haste I could; but while I was yet cleaning up brushes and palette, I heard voices in conversation close beside the open window.

"The cactus," said one of the speakers, with a strong German accent, "is doubtless of the same family as the euphorbias. Have you seen any specimens of the melon genus? They have one, I understand, in Paris."

"I have not seen it in the Jardin des Plantes," replied a second speaker, whom I at once recognised as Hugh Farquhar; "but I have had my mule lamed by its thorns, in the deserts of South Africa."

"But the juice is not unwholesome."

"By no means. Traveller and mule are alike thankful for it. Bernardin St. Pierre calls these succulent cacti 'the vegetable fountains of the desert.' I have a sketch of the melon-cactus which I shall be happy to place at your Highness's disposal."

The Grand Duke thanked him, and the voices passed away. Before I could tie on my bonnet and escape, they became audible again, and again approached the window.

"And the sketcher," said the Grand Duke, "has the privilege of perpetuating his travels. He can revisit his favourite scenes, and renew his first impressions, whenever he chooses to open his folio."

"The memory needs some such assistance," replied Hugh. "Impressions of scenery fade from the mind, like imperfect photographs, and the keenest observer cannot long continue to recall them. Who, for instance, after the lapse of half a year, could accurately reproduce the outline of a chain of Alps?"

"Who, indeed! But shall we step in here, and see how the panels are progressing in my pavilion?"

They came in. The Professor rose to receive them.

"What, Barbara?" said Hugh, with outstretched hand and a smile of frank surprise. "I never thought to find you here!"

"Sit down, sit down, Herr Metz," said the Duke, with voluble good-humour. "Do not let me interrupt the work. Ha! the English Fräulein who carried off our gold medal the other day! Good—good! Young lady, you have but to work hard, and obey Professor Metz, and you cannot fail to become a fine painter. Remember that perseverance is to genius what fuel is to the locomotive. However perfect the machine, it is of no value without the fire that propels, or the engineer who guides. What say you, Professor? What say you?"

"Your Highness has defined perseverance as

the fuel," said the Professor, bluntly; "but who is the engineer?"

"Yourself—myself—the Academy," replied the Duke, somewhat embarrassed by the detection of a flaw in his simile.

The Professor looked as if he should have liked to say something about this plurality of engineers; but he bowed instead, and held his tongue.

"And what progress has been made?" continued the Duke. "Has the Herr Professor succeeded in striking out any spark of picturesqueness from our stolid peasant-folk? So—the vintage—the Kirmess—the Schützen-fest . . . excellent subjects—excellent subjects! Herr Farquhar, permit me to introduce to you Professor Metz, our Director of Fine Arts, Hof-maler, and Academic Lecturer—a Zollenstrasser of whom Zollenstrasse is proud. This gentleman, Professor Metz, is a connoisseur, a sketcher, and a traveller who has exhausted every quarter of the globe."

The Professor bowed again; and, having taken the Duke at his word, went on painting. He was evidently in no mood for chatting, and wished his visitors farther.

"That is a charming sky," said the Grand Duke with the air of a *dilettante*.

"Yes; a sky under which one could breathe,

without feeling that all above the clouds was a dome of blue paint," replied Hugh.

"That's very true," said the Duke. "Why *do* our landscape painters make their cobalts so solid?"

"Because they will not take the trouble to remember that we have fifty miles of atmosphere above our heads. The spectator should be able to look *through* an open sky, as we seem to look through this; conscious of depth beyond depth, and distance beyond distance."

The Professor glanced up sharply; but still said nothing.

"What do you mean to have for your foreground object, Professor Metz?" asked the Grand Duke, presently.

"Nothing, your Highness."

"Nothing! Why, I thought it was a canon of art to have some foreground object to throw back the distance. A—a figure, for instance; or a fallen tree; or a piece of rock; or something?"

"I trust my distance will keep its place without needing any device of that sort, your Highness," growled the Professor.

Leopold the Eighteenth smoothed out his cream-coloured moustache, and looked puzzled.

"Still, there are canons," persisted he; "such as the division of a picture in three parts; the pro-

portions of light and shadow as three to five; the pyramidal grouping of principal objects; the introduction of . . . ."

"All mischievous pedantry, your Highness," interrupted the Professor. "Such canons may do very well for cooks. They ruin painters."

The Duke smiled furtively, and offered the Professor a cigar.

"Thanks, your Highness. I never smoke till evening."

"Then put it in your cigar-case. It is of a very rare quality."

Sulkily polite, the Professor accepted it.

"And I have a folio of etchings to show you—just arrived from Paris—containing some fine proofs of Rembrandt and Albert Dürer. Will you join the dinner-party at the Residenz this evening, Professor Metz, and oblige me with your opinion on my purchase?"

"Impossible, your Highness," blurted out the Professor, utterly disregardful of the etiquette attaching to a royal invitation. "I am not used to court dinners—I'm—I'm a very plain man—your Highness must excuse me."

His Highness looked infinitely amused.

"As the Herr Professor pleases," said he. "But if I excuse him at dinner, I hold him engaged to join our party at coffee."

"I am at his Highness's command," replied the maestro, reluctantly.

The Duke led the way to a door at the farther end of the room.

"Before we go, Herr Farquhar," said he, "I should like you to see the view from the Belvedere. Will you follow me?"

Whereupon Hugh followed, and they both went upstairs.

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed the Professor, wiping his forehead with every sign of trepidation. "Why won't these confounded aristocrats leave a man alone? Ah, Fräulein Barbara, you are escaping while you can. Quite wise. I have a vast mind to do the same."

"Oh, no, mein Professor! What would the Grand Duke think, if he found no one here?"

His eyes wandered affectionately towards the red umbrella.

"I'm afraid you are right; and yet . . . ."

"Good morning, sir."

"Humph! good morning."

I ran down the steps of the pavilion, and turned into the first shady side walk that offered. The Professor had given me a half-holiday, and I scarcely knew what to do with my liberty. I had no inclination to spend it in the Academy; and still less to waste it in the park, or the Hof-garten,

or any frequented place. After a few moments' consideration, I decided upon the Botanic Garden; a secluded, quiet spot, just beyond the Leopold Thor, where the public could only obtain admission by favour, and where we Academy students had a right of perpetual *entrée*.

I had not far to go. As I passed in at the little side-gate, the old doorkeeper said—

"You have it all to yourself, Fräulein. There hasn't been a soul here to-day."

It was just what I would have asked for. Restless and dissatisfied, I needed solitude; and the solitude here was perfect. I walked to and fro for some time among the deserted paths, and presently sought out a grassy slope where the garden went down to the river's edge. Sitting there in the shade of a group of foreign trees, and lulled by the gentle rippling of the stream among the reeds, I fell into a profound train of thought.

The future—what should I do with the future? I felt like one who has climbed the brow of a great hill, and finds only a sea of mist beyond. Go forward I must; but to what goal? With what aim? With what hopes? My father had already distinctly forbidden me to adopt art as a profession. My sister, by ignoring all the purport of my last letter, as distinctly signified her own contempt for that which was to me as the life of my life.

Neither loved me; both had wounded me bitterly; and I now, almost for the first time, distinctly saw how difficult a struggle lay before me.

"If I become a painter," I thought, "I become so in defiance of my family; and, defying them, am alone in the wide world evermore. If, on the contrary, I yield and obey, what manner of life lies before me? The hollow life of fashionable society, into which I shall be carried as a marriageable commodity, and where I shall be expected to fufil my duty as a daughter by securing a wealthy husband as speedily as possible."

Alas! alas! what an alternative! Was it for this that I had studied and striven? Was it for this that I had built such fairy castles, and dreamt such dreams?

Lost in these thoughts, I heard, but scarcely heeded, a rapid footstep on the gravelled walk above. Not till that footstep left the gravel for the grass, and a well-known voice called me familiarly by name, did I even look up to see who the intruder might be. It was Hugh.

"Why, Barbara," said he, running down the slope, and flinging himself upon the bank by my side, "I almost despaired of finding you. I have been twice round the gardens already; and but for the gatekeeper, who declared he had not let you out since he let you in, I should certainly have given you up, and gone away."

"How did you know I was here?"

"Easily enough. I saw you from the Belvedere up yonder—traced you down the path, and all along the road, and in at the side-gate—and here I find you, sitting by the river-side, like Dorothea in the Brown Mountain."

"It is my favourite nook," I replied; "the quietest spot in all this quiet garden."

"Quiet enough, certainly," said Hugh, yawning. "Might one smoke here, think you?"

"I should say so. The gardeners do."

"And your majesty has no objection?"

"My majesty has filled your hookah often enough at Broomhill, Hugh, to be tolerably well seasoned by this time."

"So you have, Barbara mia—so you have."

And with this he lighted his cigar, lay down at full length on the grass, and amused himself for some time by sending up little spiral wreaths of smoke into the still air.

"I expected to find you sketching," said he, after a long interval of silence.

"Sketching? Why, there is nothing here to sketch."

"Plenty, I should say—tropical plants, strange trees, orchids, cacti——"

"But I am not a flower-painter."

"Nonsense, Barbarina. That is just one of

the rocks that so many painters split upon. They fancy they must be either flower-painters, or landscape-painters, or figure-painters; and that in order to be one of these, they are bound to be ignorant of the other two. And yet no man was ever truly great who could not, to a certain extent, combine all three. If Raffaelle but places a lily in the hand of a Madonna, or introduces a paroquet among the ornaments of an arabesque, he paints them as though flowers and birds had been the study of his life. If Rubens undertakes a landscape background, he almost makes us regret that he ever painted anything else. The mind of the artist should be the mirror of nature, reflecting all things, and neglecting none."

"That sounds terribly like the truth, Hugh; and yet who can hope to be universal?"

"That which has been, may be," said he oracularly; and closed his eyes, and smoked like a lazy Pacha.

After this, we both sat for a long time in silence, with the golden sunlight creeping towards us, inch by inch, across the fragrant grass. Insensibly, my thoughts flowed back to their old channel, and I felt quite bewildered when Hugh broke in suddenly upon my reverie.

"I have been indulging in the queerest chain of

fantastic speculations during this last quarter of an hour," exclaimed he; "and all *à propos* of those same orchids and cacti. There will be a great revolution in the world some day, Barbara mia!"

"Will there?" said I, dreamily. "When?"

"Ten or twelve thousand years hence, perhaps."

"Then what can it matter to us?"

"Matter, child? Why, in a scientific point of view, everything. You might as well say what do the stars matter to us? There are few subjects more interesting than the variations of climate."

"Variations of climate!" I repeated. "What do you mean? You were speaking of revolutions just now."

"True; but it was a revolution of vegetables—not men."

"How absurd! Who ever heard of a revolution of vegetables!"

He laughed, flung away the end of his cigar, raised himself on his elbow, and said kindly:—

"What a child you are still, Barbara! Come, I will explain myself more clearly, and tell you what my fantastic fancies were. Would you care to hear this?"

"Yes, Hugh; very much."

"In the first place, then," said he, "our mother Nature is by no means so consistent a lady as one

might suppose; but, like the rest of her sex, is apt to change her mind. She is continually shifting sea-bords, varying the beds of rivers, and experimenting upon the mutability of matter. Thus we find ammonites and oyster-shells upon ridges of the Andes thirteen thousand feet above sea-level; and fossil fish embedded below strata of petrified forests. Thus, also, we know that land and sea are but transferable commodities in her hands; that where the tides of oceans now ebb and flow, continents may some day be upheaved; and that Europe, with all her treasures, may yet be obliterated from the surface of our globe, and leave not even a legend of her glory."

He paused; passed his hand over his forehead, as if to collect his thoughts; and then, finding me attentive, resumed the thread of his discourse.

"Of all Nature's conditions," pursued he, "climates and products are among the most variable. Fossilized remains, indicative of torrid heats, are found underlying the upper strata of our northern lands, and the beds of many European rivers are paved with the bones of elephants and other 'very strange beasts.' I have myself been present at the opening of a cave in South Devon, where the skeletons of hyenas, tigers, and even crocodiles were found in abundance. Now these facts can only be explained in one of two ways. Either the

climates of the globe have varied from age to age; or some vast motive power has transported these remains from one hemisphere to the other. For my part, I go with those who attribute the phenomena to mutability of climate, consequent on the shifting of the poles. I believe that they have not only shifted, but are shifting; that the face of the world has not only changed, but is changing; and that what once was, will surely be again."

"Yet these great changes were Pre-adamite," I ventured to suggest, "and perhaps only prepared the world for man's habitation. Is it likely they would be renewed now, when . . . ."

"Listen," interrupted Hugh, with sudden vivacity; "for this is precisely my pet theory. The cactus is a plant indigenous to the tropics, and to certain districts of the new continent. In Peru, in Chili, on the table-lands of the Andes, and on the banks of the Amazon, it is equally familiar to the traveller; and yet of late years—nay, within the last quarter of a century—it has spread mysteriously through North Africa and Syria, and naturalised itself in Greece and Italy. What is the evident deduction? What if this migration be the herald of strange changes? What if we are about to return by gradual but perceptible degrees to that temperature which, in ages past, is known to have fostered the bamboo and zamia on the plains of France, peopled with apes

the Isle of Sheppey, and crowned the promontories of Portland with forests of the Indian palm?"

"It is a large inference to draw from the migration of a single plant," said I.

"And then think of all that it would lead to," continued he, with unabated eagerness. "Think of the difference it would make in our manners and customs, our civilization, our *morale*, our politics! Fancy the Belgian flats turned into rice-fields, and crocodiles sunning themselves on the meadow-islands of the Rhine! Fancy a lion-hunt in the New Forest! Fancy honourable members going down to the house in palanquins, and the premier taking out his stud of elephants for a little tiger-shooting in September!"

"Fancy yourself with a shaved head and a turban," said I, laughing. "Fancy Broomhill fitted up with punkahs and mosquito curtains; and think how its master would look reposing on a divan, with slaves fanning him to sleep!"

"Oh, prophet Mahomed!" exclaimed he, "I should buy beautiful Circassians in the Marché des Innocents!"

"But, Hugh, supposing that all these things really took place, and we could live to see them, should we, or our descendants, get brown, or copper-coloured, or black? What a dreadful thing that would be!"

"Ah, that is another and more difficult question still," said he, gravely. "It involves the vexed topics of race and climate; and leads one into a thousand labyrinths of speculation. *I* believe that colour and type result from custom and locality. I believe that we should degenerate in form, darken in hue, and, after a few generations, lose every trace of our Caucasian origin. Take the Americans, for instance. Gathered together from all the shores of the old world, they have, as it were, received a type of nationality from the very soil on which they dwell—a type which becomes apparent in every second generation of emigrants."

"In short, then, to change climates would simply be to change states with the Asiatic."

"Aye; and some day the Hindoo race, grown warlike and hardy, would pour down upon our feeble millions, ransack our treasuries, farm out our royalties, and lord it over us as we now lord it at Calcutta. Faith! the picture is complete."

Whereupon, we rose, for the sun was now full in our eyes, and strolled towards the hot-houses. There Hugh showed me some strange plants; described the places where they grew; the uses to which they were put; and the circumstances under which he had seen them when travelling in the far East. Anecdote, illustration, and jest

flowed from his lips that afternoon with the same freshness and abundance that used to charm my childish imagination years ago; and I almost fancied, as I listened, that I was back again sitting at his feet in my aunt's quiet parlour, or turning over the folios in the Hogarth room at Broomhill.

By and by, the clocks of Zollenstrasse struck five, at which hour the students had coffee, before going for their evening walk; so I bade Hugh a hurried good-bye, and we parted at the gate. Before I had gone many yards, however, I paused, looked round, found that he was still gazing after me, and so turned back again.

"One more word, Hugh," I said, breathlessly. "What would it cost to go to Rome?'

"To Rome? From what point?"

"From here."

"Why do you ask?"

"No matter—I want to know."

"Well, I can hardly tell. It would cost me, perhaps, a hundred pounds; but then I'm not an economical traveller. I daresay a modest, quiet, steady-going fellow, who did not stop to sketch and dawdle on the way, might do it for half, or even a quarter of that sum."

"And I suppose one might live and lodge there for about a pound a week?"

"Yes, no doubt. I question if many of the poor devils of artists in the Via Margutta have as much."

"Thank you. Once more, good-bye."

"But, Barbara—I say, Barbara . . . ."

However, I did not want to be questioned, so I only shook my head, and ran away.

"Twenty pounds!" said I, unconsciously thinking aloud, as I sat on the side of my bed that night, before putting out the candle. "Twenty pounds, at least, for the journey, and then fifty more for a year's living! Oh, dear me! how could I ever save all that out of sixteen pounds per annum?"

"What did you say, Barbara?" murmured Ida, sleepily, from her bed in the corner.

To which I only replied—

"Nothing, *Liebchen.* Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PIPER OF HAMELIN.

"Hamelin town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin was a pity.
Rats!" ROBERT BROWNING.

"Bring me back yoursel', Jamie."
SCOTCH SONG.

"My dear little Barbara," said Hugh, taking possession of the Professor's painting stool, and advantage of the Professor's dinner-hour, "I am very glad to find you alone; for I have come to

say good-bye. I am going to St. Petersburgh."

I felt myself turn scarlet, and then pale.

"To St. Petersburgh?" I repeated.

"Aye. It is one of the places I have not yet visited, and I have a mind to become acquainted with our friend the Russ, in his own capital. I want to see what is the actual difference between Ivan the prince, who rents his hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin and runs his horse at Newmarket, and Ivan the boor, who leads the life of a beaten hound, and drinks brandy from his cradle."

"Is this a sudden resolution?"

"Yes—all my resolutions are sudden, *carina*. I am the slave of a demon whose name is Whim; and when he casts his spells about me, I cannot choose but obey. Did you never hear of the Piper of Hamelin?"

I shook my head.

"Then, Barbara, your education has been neglected. Listen, and I will tell you the story. Once upon a time, and a very long time ago, the town of Hamelin in Brunswick was infested by a plague of rats. There were, in fact, more rats than townspeople; and the race of cats was exterminated. So the mayor and council met to discuss the matter, and decide what was best to be done. In the midst of their conference, in came a little gnome-like creature clad in yellow and red,

carrying a flageolet in his hand . . . . but you are not listening, *carina!*"

"Yes, yes, I am listening. Pray, go on."

"And this queer little piper offered to spirit the rats clean away, for the small consideration of one thousand guilders. The Mayor was only too glad to close with him; the bargain was struck; the piper set up a quaint melody; and out came the rats from cellar and sewer, garret and basement—red rats, grey rats, black rats, rats of all ages, sizes, and colours—and followed the piper by thousands through the main street of the town, right down to the banks of the river Weser, where they all plunged in and perished, like the host of Pharaoh."

"But what has this to do with your journey to St. Petersburgh?"

"Let me finish my legend in peace, and then I will tell you. Well, when the rats were all drowned, and not even a tail of one was left behind, the Mayor repented his liberality, and declined to sign the order for the thousand guilders. 'You shall have ten,' said he, 'and a bottle of wine; but when we talked of paying a thousand, it was only for the joke of it.' 'Is that your last word on the matter, Herr Mayor?' asked the piper. 'It is our last word,' replied the Mayor and Councillors, all together. So the piper made a bow, more in mockery than in reverence; flung

the ten guilders on the floor; put his pipe once again to his lips; and walked straight to the middle of the market-place, where he took up his station, and began playing the most beautiful tune that ever was heard in Hamelin before or since. No sooner, however, had he begun to play, than such a pattering of little feet, such a clapping of little hands, and such bursts of ringing laughter filled the air, that the piper's music was nearly silenced in the hubbub. And whence came all this riot, do you suppose? Why, from all the children in the town—from the children who came trooping out, like the rats, by scores and hundreds, with their fair hair all fluttering behind them, and their little cheeks flushed with pleasure—from the children who escaped from mothers and nurses at the sound of the pipe, and followed the piper, as the rats had followed him, all down the main street, and out by the old gate leading down to the Weser! Only, Barbara, he had not the heart to drown the pretty babies. He led them into a valley at the foot of a great black mountain, about half a league from the walls; and the side of the mountain opened to receive them; and there they all are to this day, shut up in the granite heart of it, waiting till the piper shall relent from his vengeance and bring them back to the town. Now what say you to my legend?"

"That it is charming, as a legend, but very perplexing as an explanation of your St. Petersburgh journey."

"Is it possible that you have not found out that my demon and the goblin piper are one and the same; and that when he pipes, I am bound to follow, like one of the rats of Hamelin? It pleases him, just now, to pipe to a Russian tune, and off we go together, 'link'd with the Graces and the Hours in dance,' and cutting the most ludicrous-melancholy figure imaginable!"

Something in his manner, something in the telling of the story and the comment with which it ended, convinced me that he was ill at ease.

"Do not treat me quite as a child, Mr. Farquhar," I said, earnestly. "You have some deeper motive for undertaking this journey. I do not desire to know what that motive may be; but I am sure it is not whim alone."

He turned suddenly, and looked at me—then turned as suddenly away.

"You are wrong," he said, "I am the soul of whim—the sport of a restless fancy—the creature of my own morbid imagination. There are in me neither motives, nor purposes, nor principles of action. Like the thistledown, I veer with every wind; and, like the wind, am 'everything by turns, and nothing long.' I have the fancy to go

to St. Petersburgh, and I am going. *Voilà tout!*"

"Then I wish you had the fancy to stay here, instead," said I, sadly.

"Stay here? Not for the world. I have stayed too long already."

As he said the words, a shadow darkened the doorway, and Professor Metz came in. He looked unusually grave; saluted Mr. Farquhar with a nod and a scowl; and, ungraciously turning his back upon us, began painting away as if his life depended on it.

"A fine day, Herr Professor," said Hugh, vacating the stool with an apologetic bow.

"A confoundedly disagreeable day, to my mind," growled the Professor.

"Nay, with this glorious sunshine, and this refreshing breeze . . . ."

"Lapland in the shade, and the infernal regions in the sun," interrupted the Professor. "I hate such weather."

"The panels progress rapidly, Herr Professor," observed Hugh, after a brief pause. "The effect, when complete, will be charming."

"I don't think so," retorted the Professor.

"May I ask why?"

"Because the shape of the room is bad, and the light is bad, and the designs are bad, and the whole thing is a failure."

Hugh laughed outright.

"The Herr Professor has certainly left his rose-coloured glasses at home to-day," said he good-humouredly. "Happily, he will find no one to agree in his verdict."

The Professor muttered something inaudible about "public opinion," and then became so obstinately silent that, after one or two abortive efforts to keep up the conversation, Hugh was fain to take up his hat and say "good morning."

"I shall come round to-night, and bid you a last good-bye, Barbara," whispered he, as we shook hands.

"Will you really—really?" said I, the tears starting to my eyes.

"I will indeed, my dear," he replied very gently, and hurried away without once looking back.

I watched him out of sight, and was just returning to my own work, when the Professor flung down his palette and brushes, faced suddenly round upon his stool, and said—

"I must give you another holiday to-day, Fräulein Barbara."

"Why so, mein Professor? I had rather get forward with that sky."

"It isn't a question of 'rather,'" grumbled he. "You're to go back to College; Madame Brenner wants you."

"What can Madame Brenner want with me at this hour of the day?"

The Professor tugged gloomily at his moustache, and glared at me without replying.

"Still, I suppose I must go," said I, with a sigh.

"Aye," said he; "you must go."

I put on my bonnet and gloves, and went towards the door.

"Good-bye," said the Professor.

"Good-bye, sir," I replied. "I shall be back again very soon."

"No you won't," said the Professor, holding out his hand.

That Professor Metz should offer to shake hands with me was in itself such a wonderful occurrence, that I had scarcely any power of astonishment left; but that the tears should be standing in his fierce little grey eyes when our palms met, was a phenomenon so utterly and overwhelmingly unexpected, that I stared at him in blank amazement, and had not a word to say.

"Adieu," said he, holding my hand loosely, and yet not letting it go. "God bless you."

"Mein Professor," I exclaimed, with a sudden presentiment, "what is the matter? You are bidding me farewell!"

"Yes—go—" he replied, abruptly. "Go. I am bidding you farewell."

"But I will not go! What is it? What does it mean?"

"You will soon know what it means. It means that I am a superstitious old fool, who believes that his little scholar will never come back again. There, go, I tell you! Go to Madame Brenner. She is waiting for you."

I ran back all the way across the Hof-garten; but, when within a few yards of the College gates, lingered, hesitated, and dreaded to go in. I felt that something strange and sudden was at hand, and would gladly have deferred it, if I could.

"The Fräulein is to go up to Madame's room," said the porter at the gate; and so, with my heart beating fast, I obeyed.

Madame received me with open arms.

"Come hither, mein Kind," she exclaimed, "I have news for you. I have received a letter from the Herr, your father. Such news! Your sister Hilda is about to be married."

"Married!" I repeated. "Hilda married?"

"Yes, and in ten days; and you are to go immediately to Paris, to be present at the wedding."

I sat down in the nearest chair, speechless. I could not believe it.

"Though how you are to travel alone, Gott im Himmel only knows," said Madame, shaking her head, despairingly. "If the girls were not all

coming back this week, I would go with you myself; but it is impossible—impossible! There are the Pfeffers, to be sure; but they cannot start till next week; and the Bachs went yesterday. What is to be done?"

"May I see the letter, Madame?"

"Aye, to be sure. And then there are your things to be packed; and the letter says you are to go immediately. How are you to go immediately, my child, without even a passport—much less an escort?"

I took the letter, written in my father's dashing hand, and sealed with his massive seal. It ran as follows:—

"ESTEEMED MADAME,

"I have the honour of informing you that my daughter, Hilda Churchill, your late pupil, was last evening betrothed to His Excellency the Count Hippolyte Amadée de Chaumont, late plenipotentiary at the Court of Brussels, Chevalier of the Order of St. Esprit, &c., &c., &c. My daughter's marriage will take place in ten days from the present date. We desire the immediate presence of my youngest daughter, to whom be pleased to communicate the foregoing intelligence. I regret that it is not in my power personally to conduct her from Zollenstrasse to Paris; but I

trust that it may be found possible to place her under the protection of some respectable family travelling in the same direction. Be so obliging, if you please, Madame, as to let me know by an early post, at what hour, and by what conveyance, I may expect her arrival.

"Accept, Madame, my distinguished compliments, and believe me to be your obedient servant,

"EDMUND CHURCHILL."

"It is a grand match," said Madame Brenner, admiringly; "a wonderful match! She will be Madame la Comtesse—only think of that, Barbara! No mere '*Gnädige Frau*,' or '*Frau Geheimrath*;' but Madame la Comtesse de Chaumont!"

"I hope she loves him dearly," said I.

"Loves him? You may depend, she adores him," replied Madame, whose tender German heart was brimful of sentiment. "Young, noble, handsome, distinguished—how can she help loving him?"

No one had said that he was young or handsome; but Madame Brenner conceived it must be so, and believed it accordingly.

"Ah, well, well," continued she, "and we all thought she would be a singer, at one time! How little we can guess what a few months may bring

forth! I have told Professor Oberstein of his pupil's good fortune; and . . . ."

"And Professor Metz also; have you not, Madame?"

"Yes, to be sure; because I begged him to send you home at once; but I forbade him to tell you the news, because I wanted to have that pleasure myself. But, dear heart! here we are standing and chattering, while there is such a world of things to be done, and no time to do them! I have already sent Gretchen down to the laundry with all the things that want getting up; and Ida is gone into the town to buy a new ribbon for your bonnet —for you could never have gone to Paris, my dear, in this shabby old hat!—and Professor Oberstein has kindly offered to see about your passport; and I have sent down to Kräuter, the carpenter, to come and look at your boxes; for it's years and years since you came among us, and they've been lying up in the lumber-rooms ever since, and are almost tumbling to pieces by this time, I shouldn't wonder! But, Barbara, my child, I thought you would have been more pleased to hear of Hilda's betrothal?"

"I do not know, Madame. It is so sudden—I hope she may be happy."

"How can she help being happy?"

I shook my head, sadly.

"Then, are you not yourself delighted to visit Paris?"

"I had rather stay here, dear Madame Brenner, a thousand times. There is the pavilion, you know . . . I was so proud to help Professor Metz in the pavilion. And then Ida—how she will miss me!"

"How we shall all miss you, *Liebchen!*" said Madame, tenderly. "I don't know what we shall do when you're gone."

"Oh, but I shall hurry back as soon as the wedding is over."

Madame looked incredulous.

"Paris is a city of enchantment," said she. "You may like it too well to leave it; or you, also, may find a husband. Who knows?"

"But I intend never to marry! I have resolved to devote my life to painting."

"The resolutions of seventeen are easily broken," replied Madame, smiling.

"You forget how happy I am here. You forget that the College is my home."

"I forget nothing," said she; "but the hours are precious, and you will have to start early in the morning. Come upstairs, my child, at once, and let us look over your wardrobe."

But I was in despair that she should believe it

possible that I could prefer Paris and matrimony to Zollenstrasse and Art.

"You are mistaken, Madame," I repeated, as we went up the great stone stair-case. "Indeed, indeed, you are mistaken."

To which she only replied—"We shall see."

We worked hard all the rest of the day and far into the evening, trimming, repairing, and packing my little outfit. At about half-past eight o'clock, Hugh came, according to his promise, and was shown into Madame Brenner's parlour, where we were all sitting together, still busy with our needles.

"I come to bid Barbara a last adieu," said he; "for we are very old friends, as you know, Madame Brenner; and do not like parting."

"I know you are, Herr Farquhar," replied Madame; "but you are not more sorry than we are, for all that."

"Upon my word, Madame," said Hugh, looking very much surprised, and bowing politely, "you are too good."

"The place will not seem the same to any of us," continued Madame, with the tears in her kind eyes.

"I—believe me, I really do not know how to . . . ."

"And as for this poor Ida," said Madame, laying her own plump hand affectionately on Ida's slender fingers, "she will nearly break her heart, poor child."

Hugh looked from one face to another in such bewilderment and consternation, that I could forbear laughing no longer.

"And all because poor little Barbara is summoned away to Paris to her sister's wedding!" I exclaimed, purposely destroying the thread of the *double entendre*. "You did not know, Mr. Farquhar, that if you are off to-morrow to St. Petersburgh, I also start for Paris."

"You—you are going to Paris?" said he, with a deep breath of satisfaction. "This is sudden, is it not?"

"Yes, Hugh," I replied, demurely. "All my resolutions are sudden. I am the slave of a demon whose name is Whim. Did you never hear of the Piper of Hamelin?"

"The Piper of Hamelin!" repeated Madame Brenner. "Who is he, pray?"

"Oh, a friend of the Herr Farquhar, Madame. But, indeed, Hugh, I have very important news from Paris. My sister Hilda is to be married in ten days to the Count de Chaumont; and my father insists that I shall be present at the ceremony."

"But you are not going alone, little one?"

"Indeed I am."

"It is very unfortunate," said Madame; "but we have so short a notice that it is impossible to find any family travelling in the same direction."

"I am about to leave Zollenstrasse," said Hugh; "and a few days sooner or later would make no difference to me. I shall be happy to take care of Barbara as far as Paris, if Madame pleases."

The superintendant held up her hands in horror.

"Mein Gott! impossible," said she. "Such a thing was never heard of. The Herr Farquhar is a foreigner, and probably is not aware . . . ."

"Oh, *les convenances*, I suppose!" replied he, laughing. "Madame, I confess to you frankly that I am a savage. I know no more of the by-laws of life than an Esquimaux; and if I conceived that, having known Barbara Churchill since she was no taller than my cane, I might with propriety volunteer to protect her during so short a journey, blame, if you please, my ignorance only. Why, *petite*, you have never been anywhere by your own little self, ever since you were born!"

"I beg your pardon. I travelled alone to and from Suffolk, when I was a very little girl," I replied; "and Hilda and I came alone from London Bridge to these College gates, six years ago."

"And how do you propose to make your way to Paris?"

"I leave Zollenstrasse to-morrow morning by the steamboat that goes down the Main as far as Frankfort. At Frankfort I am to sleep, and thence shall go on by diligence and railroad, according to the plan that Madame will write out for me."

"Can I be of any assistance in that matter, Madame?" said he. "I know every route, road, boat, rail, and diligence by heart; and every rood of the ground between this place and Paris. In me, without vanity, I may say you behold an accomplished courier, a steamboat directory, a hotel guide, a fluent vocabulary, a polyglot interpreter, a circumstantial handbook for travellers on the Continent; and, in short, all that the most inexperienced tourist can desire in a work of reference."

"Indeed I shall be very grateful," replied Madame; "for I never can understand these new-fashioned ways of travelling. Ten years ago, one never went by anything but schnell-wagens, or steamboats; and now one hears of nothing but railroads springing up in every direction."

So Hugh pulled out his guide-book and time-tables, and he and Madame sat down quite cosily, side by side, and planned my journey for me. I

was to go by boat to Frankfort; from Frankfort by diligence to Mayence; from Mayence to Cologne by steamboat; and from Cologne by railroad to Paris. As soon as all this was written down, with the fares and hours of starting, and the names of the hotels at which I was to stay, Hugh rose and took his leave.

"Good-bye, *petite*," said he, quite gaily. "When I am tired of Russia, I shall come back to Zollenstrasse and hear all about Hilda's wedding, and the visit to Paris. What shall I bring you from St. Petersburgh?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"Nonsense—I will bring you a set of sables; or, if you like it better, a bracelet of gold roubles."

"What do I want with bracelets or sables, Hugh? Bring yourself back. I am very lonely here, now that Hilda is gone."

"Ah, Barbarina, that is more difficult! Adieu, and God bless you. Adieu, gracious Madam. I hope some day to have the pleasure of paying my respects to you again."

And with this he went away. I was very sad that evening; and I felt it hard, somehow, that he could go so cheerfully.

CHAPTER V.

A KIRMESS AND SCHÜTZEN-FEST.

It is almost as difficult to part from places that we love, as from people who are dear to us. I scarcely knew, indeed, whether my tears fell faster for the Academy, or for the friends whom I left in it. Twenty times I turned back to take a last look at the pretty bedroom which Ida and I had shared so long between us; at the familiar studio in which I had worked so happily; at the half-finished painting which I was leaving on the easel. To one I said, "Take care of my mignonette, and water it for me every morning before breakfast." To another, "Let no one take my seat in the studio, or move my easel from the corner it always occupies." To me there was somethiug significant in every petty detail of the localities I loved—some-

thing precious in the very patterns of the furniture, in the weather-stains upon the old flags in the courtyard, in the rough chalk outlines scrawled here and there on the walls of the class-rooms.

They were all sorry to part from me, and crowded round to bid me a thousand last good-byes. Professor Metz came out from his private room to shake hands with me; Madame Brenner accompanied me to the wharf; and Ida, and two or three others who had not gone home for the vacation, went down to the bridge to see me off. To every one I kept repeating, "I shall be back soon! I am sure to be back, at the latest, in a month, or five weeks." But my heart failed me all the time; and the more I strove to console others, the more inconsolable I became. At length the bell rang, and Madame left me, with many embraces; and the steamer hove slowly round, and carried me away. My school-friends on the bridge waved their handkerchiefs. Madame Brenner put hers to her eyes, and turned away; and Ida's pale, tearless face grew less and less distinct, till the bend of the river carried us out of sight, and the last spire of Zollenstrasse disappeared behind the woods of Brühl.

The morning was dull and chilly. The decks were still damp from recent swabbing. The passengers were few, and the scenery looked ghostly

through the white fog hanging low upon the banks. Whenever we came to a little river-side village, which happened about four or five times in every hour, the bell rang, and the steamer lay to for the purpose of receiving and landing passengers. These were chiefly market-women and washer-women, who piled their picturesque baskets in the middle of the deck, and sat knitting and chattering together as long as they remained on board. Some brought crates of live poultry; some, glittering brass milk-cans, slender and graceful as antique vases; and one was accompanied by a very noisy and disobliging pig, who protested loudly against the manner of transit, and was landed by force at a squalid little hamlet about eight miles down the river. By and by, shortly after midday, we arrived at an ancient walled town standing on a granite cliff high above the stream, with a line of quaint watch-towers reaching down to the water's edge. Here we stopped, as usual, and took in some soldiers, a few peasants, and a pair of splendid horses, covered with horse-clothes from their ears to their fetlocks. Sad and weary as I was (for the four hours that I had already been on board seemed like sixteen) I saw, but scarcely heeded, these fresh arrivals. What, then, was my amazement, when a gentleman came and flung

himself familiarly on the bench beside me, and said—

"Shall we go down together to the cabin, and have some lunch, Fräulein?"

Without even turning my head to look at him, I rose indignantly, and was about to move away, when he seized me by the wrist, and added—

"Barbarina!"

"What, Hugh?"

"Of course. Who else?"

"But—but how" . . . .

"How came I here? Well, by a post-chaise, if I am bound to render up an account of my proceedings. I sent my horses to this place last night—it is only fourteen miles by the road—and followed them this morning, just in time to catch the boat, and place myself at your Highness's service. I had no mind that my little Barbarina should travel to Paris alone."

"Oh, Hugh, how good of you—how wrong of you! What would Madame say if she knew it?"

"What she pleased, *carina*. I have a right to travel when and where I choose. Would you like to come and look at the horses?"

Of course I liked to look at the horses. I should have liked to look at a pair of basilisks, by his invitation. I knew nothing about horses; but that was of no consequence. I admired them

because they were his; and a smart English groom, whose top-boots were the wonder of all the German rustics on board, stepped forward and unbuckled the horse-clothes for my especial satisfaction. This done, we went into the cabin and had sour claret and tough cutlets for lunch; by which time the fog had cleared away, and the sun was shining, and it became quite a pleasant thing to go on deck again, and enjoy the scenery.

All that day, Hugh exerted himself to keep me amused and cheerful. He pointed out every picturesque effect, every ruin, boat, and incident on the way. For me he ransacked the store-houses of his memory; for me raked up every dry and dusty legend of the Franconian land—legends of the Fichtelgebirge, and the magical mountain filled with halls of gold and jewels; and the story of Conrad the devil; and the history of the Empress Cunigunda, whose petticoat is kept to this day in the Cathedral of Bamberg, as a cure for the toothache.

Besides all this, I found myself travelling *en princesse*, and surrounded with unaccustomed luxury. At Frankfort, where we stopped for the night, Tippoo suddenly made his appearance, and, after his old noiseless fashion, took the charge and conduct of everything. He seemed neither to see nor recognise me; but, having quietly searched

out our luggage, and delivered over the groom and horses to an ostler who was waiting on the quay, preceded us to a spacious hotel, where we were received by a crowd of bowing waiters, and ushered into a pleasant parlour opening upon a garden, at the foot of which flowed the river Main. Here the table was ready-laid with glittering glass and silver, and flowers that filled the air with fragrance.

"What a charming room!" I exclaimed.

But Hugh flung his hat impatiently upon a sofa, and said:—

"How is this, Tippoo? Did I not tell you the pavilion?"

"Sahib, the pavilion is engaged."

"*Mille diables!* Remember, then, that to-morrow I have the Green Drawing-Room overlooking the river."

"Yes, Sahib."

"You see, Barbara," explained Hugh, "I have my favourite apartments, wherever I go; and it is Tippoo's duty to secure them. I have also my own especial taste in the matter of *cuisine*. I cannot eat these innocuous European dishes. I must have my Indian spices, and, like Sir Epicure Mammon, bargain for 'the tongues of carp, dormice, and camels' heels:'—so Tippoo always travels in advance, and prepares both the rooms and the dinner.

Nay, never look so dismayed, little one! For you I have provided

> 'Syllabubs, and jellies, and mince-pies,
> And other such lady-like luxuries.'

I have no mind to starve you between this and Paris."

"And where is this green-parlour of which you spoke just now?"

"At Coblentz, where we break our journey again to-morrow evening. But will you not go to your room now; for we are already somewhat after the time at which I ordered dinner?"

So I hastened to take off my bonnet, and make such scanty toilette as I could; and then came back to the pretty parlour, where we dined in great state, with Tippoo standing behind his master's chair, and two waiters in attendance. Despite this grandeur, the dinner passed off merrily, thanks to my companion's inexhaustible gaiety. After the cloth was removed, we strolled for an hour through the old dusky streets in the summer twilight, and saw the Cathedral, and the house where Goethe was born, and the Ober-Main Thor, and the gilt weather-cock at which the child-poet loved to gaze in the sunshine. Then, when it grew quite dark, we came back to our hotel; and coffee was served; and Tippoo produced the never-failing

hookah, and the spirit-lamp in its stand of frosted-silver. So I bade good night, and left Hugh to enjoy his pipe and his book.

The next morning we were breakfasting before six; for the railway at that time was only just commenced between Frankfort and Mannheim, and we had a long day's work before us. Instead of the weary schnell-wagen, a smart open carriage and four post-horses, with bells upon their collars, and red-worsted tassels and rosettes upon their heads, waited at the hotel-door to convey us on our journey. The landlord and waiters bowed us out, calling Hugh "my lord," and me "my lady;" the little boys set up a feeble cheer as we stepped in and drove away; and I remember feeling quite sorry that the good people of Frankfort were not up and stirring, to witness the grandeur of our departure.

It was a glorious summer day, and we had nothing to do but enjoy it to the music of the horses' bells, and the singing of the birds. We had it all to ourselves. Tippoo, as usual, had gone on before; the groom and horses were left behind, to follow by easy stages; and if a remorseful thought of Madame Brenner did now and then cross my mind, I banished it as quickly as possible. About every two German miles we changed horses; and at eleven in the forenoon reached a quaint

little town where there was a *Kirmess*, or fair, and a shooting festival going forward. Here our arrival created an extraordinary excitement; for the streets were full of rustics, to whom the sight of a travelling-carriage with four horses and two postilions was an event of some magnitude. The market-place and chief thoroughfare were lined with booths; the eating-houses were full of customers; the free-shooters, in their grey and green coats and steeple-crowned hats, were standing in knots at the doors of the wine-shops; the bare-headed, broad-shouldered peasant-girls were crowding, gossiping, and eating gingerbread in the broiling sunshine; and the air was all alive with laughter, music, shouting, shooting, and the creaking of merry-go-rounds. Having with difficulty procured a disengaged parlour, we stopped at the principal inn to take lunch, and while it was being prepared, went out to see something of the fair.

It was a thorough German Volks-Fest, and the booths were stocked with thorough German wares. Here was a stall for combs, probably made at Heidelberg, and beside it a fantastic little temple piled high with compact brown bundles of "Brennen Cigarren." Beyond these again, came stalls for the sale of untanned leather, soft and velvety, with a curly surface, like brown tripe—stalls for mock jewellery and bead necklaces, dear to German

Mädchens—stalls full of Tyrolean knapsacks, faced with goatskin and ornamented with fringes of knotted twine—stalls of Nüremberg toys; beer-jugs grey and blue, with hieroglyphic patterns; tin oil lamps, preserving something of the antique Roman shape; Bavarian glass; umbrellas, chiefly of coloured chintz and scarlet gingham; gorgeous gingerbread; brooms; brushes; spectacles; clocks; cutlery; Lutheran hymn-books and Roman Catholic missals; stationery; china; silver hair-arrows; pumpernickel; cravats; and wooden shoes. One stall was exclusively devoted to the sale of mouse-traps. But foremost in attraction, and most characteristic of all, were the pipe-stalls. Here were carved wooden pipes; great porcelain pipes with coloured pictures of huntsmen and maidens on the bowls; pipes with metal stoppers and little German silver chains; pipes without stoppers; pipes of cherrywood, clay, meerschaum, red-earth; pipes with twisted stems, elastic stems, short stems, long stems; comic pipes with queer faces on the bowls; solemn pipes, like grinning death's heads; portly aldermanic pipes; slender, genteel ones—in short, pipes of all shapes and complexions, sizes, prices, and colours. The love of the German for his pipe is almost a sentiment; and he puts into the pattern and painting of it such small change of fancy, humour, and poetry, as passes current with

the honest Gottliebs and Heinrichs of everyday life.

Mingling still with the noisy crowd, Hugh and I passed through these long avenues of stalls till we came to the old mediæval town-gate. Beyond this lay a meadow, part of which was partitioned off for the shooting ground, while the rest was filled with booths of a larger size than those within the walls. Here were tents with the words "*Tanz Musik*" painted up conspicuously over the entrance; in each of which we saw some twenty or thirty stalwart couples whirling and stamping about as merrily as if the midday sun were not shining down with almost tropical splendour. Here, too, were Punch and Judy shows, where the showman appeared on the stage in person, as far as his head and shoulders, and exchanged thumps with his quarrelsome hero—peepshows containing views of London, Paris, and the Rhine—*manèges*, in which grown-up folks were going gravely round—and the great "Puppet-theatre from Vienna," recommended to public admiration by a huge external fresco representing two gentlemen in Paul Pry costume with labels issuing from their mouths, on one of which was inscribed, "I have been to see it, and it is splendid!" To which the other replies, "I would go; but I haven't a groschen!"

Beyond the shows lay the refreshment booths;

ambitious edifices of planks and canvas, surmounted by flags, and disclosing vistas of tables and benches occupied by jovial holiday folks, feasting on German sausages, black bread, Swiss cheese, and flagons of thin Rhenish or sparkling Baïerisch. These booths bore all kinds of high-sounding titles, such as Bavarian Beer-Halls, Jäger's Refreshment Halls, Free-shooters' eating-rooms, Kirmess Gasthofs, and the like; whilst in their neighbourhood hovered professional touters who filled our hands with printed advertisements and our ears with vociferate praises of the establishments to which they were severally attached.

"Try Mollberg's 'Temple of Cookery,' gracious Excellency!" cries one Jewish-looking fellow with gold rings in his ears. "Venison, nödel soup, grape-cakes, and the best Lager-bier in the world, for thirty-six kreutzers per head!"

"Come to Schwindt's Restauration, Herr Graf!" shouts another. "The best hotel in Frankfort couldn't serve you better!"

"Read this, *gnädiges Fräulein*," says a third, thrusting a slip of paper into my hand. "Read this, and persuade the Herr Excellency to bring you to the 'Hunter's Delight.'"

The slip of paper proves to be an advertisement in doggrel rhyme, over which Hugh and I have a

hearty laugh together; and which, roughly translated, would run as follows:—

ESSER'S KIRMESS RESTAURANT.

"*The Hunter's Delight.*"

Come, neighbours, 'tis our yearly fair;
Let all to Esser's booth repair!
There ev'ry friend and honour'd guest
May freely feast upon the best.
Cutlets, and sucking pigs, and veal,
Hams, jellies, capons, ducks, and teal,
Plums, peaches, melons, figs, and pease,
All kinds of sausages and cheese,
Anchovies, sardines, oysters, steaks,
And (for the women) sweets and cakes;
All these, and more (if you've the mind)
At Esser's eating-rooms you'll find.
As for my stock of wine and beer,
I cannot dwell upon it here;
Enough that there will be, as well,
An extra cask of prime Moselle;
So good that it would be a shame
If but a single schoppen came
To palates dulled by beer and spirits,
And, therefore, tasteless to its merits.
So come, my friends, and try my famous cheer:
A bottle and a capon, who need fear?
Remember, Kirmess comes but once a year!

Resisting the attractions held out by these beery and smoky temples of festivity, we crossed to the free-shooters' ground, where some eighty riflemen were gathered together at the lower end of the

field; each man with his gun in his hand, and all wearing the characteristic hat and coat of the brotherhood. At the upper end of the enclosure stood three large targets. In a small tent close by were ranged the prizes to be shot for. In a large booth against the place of entrance, a young woman dispensed wine and beer, and an old man collected the shooting-fees. These were about twopence each for entrance, and a penny for every shot.

"Stand aside, *meine Herren*," cried the old money-taker, as we passed the wicket, and came in. "Stand aside, and let His Excellency have a shot!"

But Hugh laughed, and shook his head.

"I have no gun, friend," said he.

"Eh, *mein Gott*, Excellency, here are guns in plenty. See—one, two, three, four, five, six!"

And the old man pointed to a row of well-used rifles ranged on a stand behind his counter.

"The Herr Excellency is welcome to mine," said a handsome free-shooter, standing close by.

Something in the man's tone, perfectly civil though it was, brought the angry colour to my cheeks.

"Take it, Hugh; take it," I whispered. "These men think you cannot shoot."

"And what matter if they do, *carina*? They are the best rifle-shots in the world, except the Tyroleans; and they know it."

"But you are quite as fine a marksman as any Tyrolean in Tyrol."

"I am a very fair marksman," replied Hugh; "but . . . ."

"But they do not believe it! See, they are smiling. Do—do take the man's rifle."

He laughed, and took it.

"The young lady wishes it," said he; "so I accept your offer, friend, with thanks. A heavy gun to carry on a long day's shooting, upon my word!"

"We mountaineers think nothing of heavier rifles than this," said the free-shooter, with a slight curl of his handsome lip. "I come from the Black Forest; and I carry that gun on my shoulder all day, where the mountains are steepest. Take care, Excellency. When cocked, a breath is almost enough to free the trigger."

But Hugh, balancing the rifle in his hand, seemed scarcely to hear the warning.

"What is the distance of your farthest target?" asked he. "Three hundred paces?"

"Two hundred and fifty, Excellency," replied the old man at the counter.

Hugh lifted the rifle to his shoulder and fired, almost without seeming to take aim.

"Stop!" shouted he, as some half-dozen free-shooters began running towards the target. "Stop!

Another shot first! Will anyone lend me another rifle?"

One of the recalled runners handed his own immediately.

Hugh fired again.

"Now," said he carelessly, "find the two balls."

The target was presently surrounded. There was a moment of silence; then a shout; then a sudden waving of caps, and a general rush towards the further end of the field.

"What *have* you done, Hugh?" cried I, scarcely able to forbear following the example of the rest. "What *have* you done?"

"Fired the second ball precisely upon the first, if I am not strangely mistaken," answered he. "I could have done the same thing at nearly double the distance. Why, you excitable little monkey, you are quivering from head to foot! Surely the firing does not frighten you?"

"Frighten me! Do you suppose I tremble from terror? But this must be a wonderful feat?"

"They seem to think so."

"How glad I am you fired!"

"So am I, Barbarina, since it has given you pleasure; but I did not desire to do so. There is something 'snobbish' in exhibitions of skill, merely as exhibitions."

By this time the men had thronged back again,

and were pressing round us; all eager to shake hands with Hugh at the same moment.

"We never saw such a shot!"

"The Herr Excellency is Tell come back again!"

"*Wunderbar!*"

"*Unerhört!*"

And the bullets, completely socketted the one in the other, were passed from hand to hand among the crowd.

In the meantime, the young woman at the counter had fetched a heavy earthenware drinking *Krug* with a still heavier German-silver lid, representing a free-shooter sitting astride on a beer-barrel, and presented it to Hugh with much ceremony.

"What am I to do with this, mein Fräulein?" asked he, gallantly. "Shall I drink your health in it?"

"It is the first prize, Excellency," replied the young woman with a curtsey.

"Nay, nay, I do not wish for a prize!"

"But his Excellency has won it."

"Yes! Yes! Fairly won it! Take it! Take it!" was echoed on every side.

"I had rather leave it still to be shot for," said Hugh; "but I will gladly drink a health out of it, to my friends the German free-shooters. They, in

return, must, however, allow me to offer them some of the Fräulein's best Lager-bier. Fräulein, have you enough of the best to furnish all these Herren with two *Schoppen* each?"

"With three, if the Herr Excellency pleases," replied the young woman, briskly.

"Then three let it be. Gentlemen, to your health and success."

Saying which, Hugh Farquhar drained a measure in their honour; returned the cup to the Mädchen, with a broad gold-piece lying at the bottom; shook hands once more with the honest riflemen all round; and, giving me his arm, hastened away from the meadow and the fair, and round by a pretty field-path to the gate by which we had first entered the town. Long before we left it, which was in less than an hour from the time we regained our inn, the fame of Hugh's achievement had flown all over the place; so that there was quite a crowd about the door when we drove away. Their last shout rings in my ears to this moment. I never was so proud and happy before; indeed, I doubt whether, at any period of my life, I have been so proud and so happy at the same instant of time. It was one of those rare and transient gleams of pure, unalloyed, unselfish, perfect pleasure that glance now and then, like mysterious *étoiles filantes*, across the dark horizon of our lives.

That afternoon we took the Rhine steamer at Mayence, and went with the rapid river as far as Coblentz, where we had the green-room with the balcony overlooking the river, just as Hugh had directed. Here we found the table laid, and the dinner ready; and after dinner, being too tired to stroll about as we had done the night before, we sat outside, and watched the late steamers coming in; and the people going to and fro across the bridge of boats; and the lights along the banks coming out brighter and brighter as the twilight crept up from the west, and the stars stole out overhead. Then coffee was brought; and, after coffee, the spirit-lamp and the hookah; but Hugh laid the pipe aside, and said—

"Stay a little longer, Barbarina. By this time to-morrow we shall be in Paris; and then, who knows when we shall meet again?"

So I sat down again, and he talked to me. Such talk! At that time, though tolerably well read in German literature, I was but slightly acquainted with any, except Shakespeare, among our English poets. Of Coleridge, I knew only that he was the author of "The Ancient Mariner," and a brother-in-law of Robert Southey. Had I then read any of those written testimonies in which his friends and hearers bear witness to the wonders of his eloquence —that eloquence which was reported to "marshal

all history, harmonize all experiment, and probe the depths of all consciousness"—I might, perhaps, have been able to measure Hugh Farquhar's conversation by something of an ideal standard. As it was, I lost myself in listening; and he went on from topic to topic, from speculation to speculation, like an inspired dreamer.

I can recall only fragments of what he said—mere waifs and strays of splendid reasoning and gorgeous metaphor. To put them into anything like an intelligible form would, at this distance of time, be altogether impossible. He began, I think, by some observation on the night-landscape before our windows, and thence diverged into Shakespeare's sonnets, Goethe's Theory of Plants, the influence of poetry, the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney, and the Utopia of Sir Thomas More. Hence he plunged into a strange theory of the fundamental unity of the arts, and related some wild adventure of his own in the depths of a South American forest, where he chanced one day upon the ruins of a primæval temple, and found, yet standing erect above its portals, a sculptured figure with uplifted arm and broken bow; rude, imperfect, but embodying the identical conception of the Belvedere Apollo.

Supposing, even, that I could remember his very words, reconstruct his very sentences, how

should I then express the power and variety of his style? It was like the flowing of a royal river; now broad and strong—now narrow, and wild, and eager—now bearing the sunlight along with it, like a freight of jewels—now gliding subtly through the shadow—now winding round some sweet green isle of fancy—and anon breaking forth into foam, and hurrying on, on, till it leaps over the rocks with a mighty voice of triumph.

But to describe all this, "one should write like a god."

When, at length, he came to a pause, and saw how earnestly I was listening, he smiled sadly, rose from his chair, and began pacing to and fro, as was his wont, when moved by strong excitement.

"Barbara," said he, "to-night my thoughts run away with me, and I, like a foolish Phaeton, cannot hold them in. Do I weary you?"

"You cannot weary me," I replied. "Even when I was a child, and less able to understand you, I used to think that I could go on listening to you for ever."

"And do you understand me now?"

"Yes—in a certain sense."

"What do you mean by 'a certain sense?'"

"I mean that even when your ideas are too deep, or too high, for my following, I always feel

their beauty; as I might feel the melody of a language that I had never heard before.".

Suddenly, before I could guess what he was about to do, he clasped me in his arms, and kissed me twice or thrice upon the eyes and forehead—kissed me so wildly, so passionately, so strangely, that I could neither speak nor move, nor be anything but passively and tremblingly amazed. Then, releasing me as suddenly—

"Child! child!" he exclaimed, "forgive me! I am not myself to-night. Leave me. Go to bed—forget this folly. Pshaw! I am old enough to be your father. There—shake hands. I am not going to kiss you again. Good night."

Without a word, I left him and went to my room. I felt strange and bewildered, as if I were walking in my sleep; and my heart beat painfully. To shed tears might have been a relief; but no tears came—so I sat, half undressed, upon the bed, with my face buried in my hands, and the moonlight streaming in through the uncurtained casement. By and by, my eyes grew heavy and my thoughts more vague, till at last I was fain to lay my tired head upon the pillow, and fall fast asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

PARTING AND MEETING.

We met the next morning, and resumed our journey, as if nothing had taken place. Finding that Hugh in nowise alluded to the events of the previous evening, I gradually recovered my self-possession, and came to look upon them as the results of a fantastic ebullition—a freak—a suggestion of the Goblin Whim; and so ceased to puzzle myself about the matter.

Still, things were not quite the same with us. I observed that he was more grave and silent than heretofore, and that he frequently roused himself to talk on subjects from which his thoughts were far distant. Thus a shade of restraint interposed between us, and our third day's journey seemed ten times longer than either of those by which it was preceded.

We left Coblentz very early in the morning, while the mists were yet hanging about the armed heights of Ehrenbreitstein, and, landing at Bonn, thence took the railway to Paris. I had never travelled by railway before! My journey to Zollenstrasse had been accomplished nearly all the way by water; and most of the great Continental and English lines had sprung into existence during the time of my quiet academic life. I remember that I was very much impressed by the speed, and smoothness, and mysterious strength of this new power. I was even somewhat nervous, though I would not confess it; and felt that it was a great additional security to have Hugh Farquhar sitting by my side.

It was a weary journey, and we did not come in sight of Paris till past ten o'clock in the evening. All the afternoon, while it was yet day, I had been wondering when these monotonous corn-flats and lines of melancholy poplars were to be relieved by something green and hopeful—and now that the dusk had closed in, and the lights glared up to the sky, and the blurred outline of a mighty city seemed to gather round us, with towers and spires uplifted here and there through the darkness, a great depression fell upon me. Yet a little farther, and the houses grew thicker, and the lights nearer. Then came nothing but stone walls on either side,

and a glass roof over head, and a blaze of brilliant gas; and it was Paris at last.

We alighted, and there, as usual, was Tippoo waiting to receive us.

"Look round, Barbara," said Mr. Farquhar, "and see if there be any face you know."

I looked round; but, though the platform was not crowded, I saw no one who I could suppose was there to meet me. We went into the waiting rooms; but they were empty. We came back to the platform; and still with the same result.

"They have either forgotten you, Barbarina, or made some mistake about the time," said my companion. "And yet the train is true to a minute."

"And I wrote last evening from Coblentz," said I, "as soon as we arrived. It is not flattering to be forgotten."

"At all events you remember your father's address?"

"No—but I have his letter in my pocket."

"Then we need only send Tippoo for a cab. Here, Tippoo—a *voiture de place!*"

But, to my dismay, I could not find the letter! One by one, I took out all the contents of my pocket, and found that, beyond a doubt, I had left the letter on my bedroom table at the hotel in Coblentz. I had no need to tell of my loss—my face told it for me.

"Never mind!" said Hugh, smiling. "The misfortune is not irreparable. We must e'en go to Meurice's together, and be fellow-travellers for twelve hours longer."

"But . . . ."

"But I engage to find your father before noon to-morrow; so think no more about it. Come, it is of no use to linger here."

Just at this moment, as we were preparing to leave the station, a servant in livery came hurrying up the platform. He compared his watch with the railway-clock, looked at me, looked at my companion, hesitated, looked at the clock again, and finally, touching his hat, came forward and said—

"Pardon, Madame! Je cherche Mademoiselle Churchill."

Which statement put an end to all my difficulties.

Mr. Farquhar gave me his arm; the servant preceded us; a porter followed with the luggage; and Tippoo brought up the rear. To my surprise, I found a carriage drawn up and waiting for me at the entrance—a superb carriage, with blazing lamps, and crested hammercloths, and a pair of magnificent bays.

"Adieu, Barbara," said Hugh, as I turned to say good-bye. "Our companionship is ended."

"For the present, Mr. Farquhar."

"Ay—for the present. Who cares for the past, and who dare answer for the future? Thou wilt forget me when I am gone—eh, little Barbara?"

"No, sir."

"'*No, sir*,' indeed! Why you are as sparing of protest as Cordelia herself! I shall send Tippoo on the box, to see you safely home. Is this your father's carriage?"

"I do not think so."

"Nay, then, whence comes it?"

"I neither know nor care; but, if you are curious, you can inquire."

"Of course I shall inquire. There may be witchcraft in it. Good Heavens! it might turn to a pumpkin before you were half-way home—who knows?"

And with this he asked the servant to whom the equipage belonged.

"*A Monsieur le Comte de Chaumont.*"

"To your future brother-in-law, Barbarina; who, it appears, is as good a judge of a horse as of a bride. Now, fare-you-well, since I know that you are in safe custody."

"Good-bye—but do not send Tippoo with me. It is quite unnecessary."

"It is not unnecessary, if I choose to be satisfied of your safety. Besides, I shall then know your address."

"And will you make use of it?" I asked, eagerly. "Will you come and see me, before you go to St. Petersburgh?"

He lingered for a moment with my hand in his, and his foot on the carriage-step.

"I do not know—perhaps!" he said abruptly; and so shut the door upon me, and turned away.

In another moment I was whirling through the busy Paris streets—streets bright as day, lined with foliage, crowded with pleasure-seekers, and noisy with the multitudinous life of a great city! Dazzled and bewildered, I knew not at which side to look, or what most to admire; and in the midst of it all, the scene changed to what seemed like a huge park traversed by innumerable avenues of lamps, and filled with one moving mass of carriages and riders. Here we proceeded for some distance at a foot-pace, till we came to a large circular opening with a fountain in the midst, and then turned aside into an avenue, comparatively dark and empty, with houses peeping whitely through the trees. Before one of these we stopped. It was a handsome residence, with a garden and a high wall dividing it from the road, and heavy wooden gates, that opened to admit the carriage.

An English page, in a plain black suit, was waiting in the hall. I alighted, and looked round for

Tippoo, but he was already gone; so I followed the servant upstairs, not without some little agitation, and wondered with what kind of reception I should meet. At the first landing he paused, threw open a door, and stood aside to let me pass.

It was a spacious drawing-room, dimly lighted and richly furnished.

"Mrs. and Miss Churchill are gone to the opera," said the lad, seeing me look round.

"Gone to the opera?"

"Yes, miss, with the Count de Chaumont. The Count's carriage went to fetch you after setting them down."

"And my father?"

"Master is at his club, miss. Would you please to have any refreshment?"

I sat down, wearily, upon the nearest sofa; scarce able to keep down the rising tears.

"You can bring me some coffee," I replied. "And desire some one, if you please, to show me to my bed-chamber."

I looked round the room. A few illustrated books with indifferent engravings and rich bindings lay scattered here and there upon the tables. The card-baskets were full of cards. A pile of Hilda's music lay upon the piano. A shawl of Mrs. Churchill's showed from which couch she had last risen. A superb bouquet in a vase on one

of the side-tables told of the last night's party. I sighed.

"What would I not give that it were all over," thought I, "and I going back to Zollenstrasse to-morrow! Well, at all events, I shall see the Louvre!"

My reverie was interrupted by the return of the page, who brought me a very small cup of coffee on a very large salver. This youth was closely followed by a smart French lady's maid, who wore her hair drawn back *à la Chinoise*, and conducted me up-stairs to a small ill-furnished room on the fourth story. Her name, she informed me, was Juliette, and she was Mrs. Churchill's *femme de chambre*. Being abundantly loquacious, she then went on to say that she hoped to transfer herself and her accomplishments to the service of that *charmante demoiselle*, my sister, on her auspicious marriage with M'sieur le Comte de Chaumont. As for Hilda, Mademoiselle Juliette averred that she had never known any lady upon whom the arts of dress were more satisfactorily bestowed. She was so beautiful—she had such enchanting taste—she so amply repaid all the pains that one could take to adorn her charms to the greatest advantage. Then her hair . . . Ah, *ciel!* it was a real pleasure to dress such hair as Mademoiselle Hilda's! She looked

ravishing with it in every style you could name—whether *à la Grecque;* or in bands; or in ringlets *à l'Anglaise;* or *à la Sevigné;* or drawn simply back, *à l'Espagnole,* with one little *mignonne* curl on each cheek; or even with it powdered *à la Marie Antoinette,* as Mademoiselle wore it last Thursday week at the Prêfet's fancy-ball. Ah! let one figure that to oneself—powdered, positively powdered! But then Mademoiselle Barbara's hair was lovely, also. And Mademoiselle's was of the finest quality; soft, glossy, abundant, and of that exquisite brown (the brown with the chestnut flush) which is so greatly admired in the *beau monde!* Decidedly, Mademoiselle Barbara would find the new rouleaux very becoming.

But I protested that I had no wish to change the familiar fashion of my hair; whereat Mademoiselle Juliette held up both her hands, and refused to entertain any such possibility. Of all the essential points connected with a lady's toilette, said she, the art of arranging the hair was the most important. To judge of styles and their application to individuals, was in itself a study—a study to which she, Mademoiselle Juliette, had devoted herself from her youth upwards, and in which, without vanity, she believed herself without a rival. This being the case, and as it was likewise the express desire of Madame Churchill and

Mademoiselle Hilda that she should make it her especial care to transform me as speedily as possible into a faultless Parisienne, she must begin by entreating that I would permit her to dress my hair to-morrow morning *à l'Espagnole*, which she was persuaded would improve the contour of my head, display the moulding of my throat, and bring out the intellectuality of my forehead in a most unprecedented and surprising manner! To all of which, being excessively tired and preoccupied, I replied briefly enough; and brought the subject to an end by dismissing Mademoiselle Juliette for the night.

From my window I could see down to the end of the road, where it opened upon the great Park through which I had passed on my way. The carriages were still going by in one continuous stream, and I leaned out for a long time, watching the bright lamps flitting through the trees, like a current of fire-flies. It was strange to think of how much love and how much hate, what youth, what age, what eager pleasure-seekers, and what wearied world-worn hearts those lamps were lighting through the dusk of the sweet summer night. Stranger still, that this should be Paris, and that hundreds of miles hence, deep down amid the pine-grown hills that lean above the waters of the Upper Main, kind hearts and loving lips were,

perhaps, at this very moment, busy with my name.

At twelve o'clock the scene was still the same, and the moving lamps were undiminished in number; so, weary and sad, I closed the casement, and went to bed.

I fell asleep immediately, and had slept for a long time—or for what seemed a long time, so dreamless was my sleep—when I was awakened by a hand on my shoulder, and a sudden light throughout the room.

"Barbara!" said a familiar voice. "Barbara, dear! we are just home, and I would not go to bed without seeing you."

"Hilda!" I exclaimed, forgetting where I was, and looking up with a vague wonder at the radiant creature beside my bed. "Why, where have you been?"

"To the opera first, and then to a reception at the Prussian embassy. Did not Bruce tell you?"

"To the opera?" I repeated. "Ah, true—I remember. And the Count?"

"The Count de Chaumont was with us, of course. He goes everywhere with us. To-night he gave me this bracelet—see, is it not beautiful? —a snake in blue enamel, set with diamonds!"

I looked at the bracelet, and then at her.

"I scarcely know which is the more beautiful," I said, smiling. "He may well be proud of you!"

She laughed, cast away the lace cloak from her shoulders, and sat down on the edge of my bed.

"He *is* proud of me," she replied, well pleased with my admiration. "He already introduces mamma to everyone as his *belle-mère*, and not a day passes that he does not bring me some splendid gift. On Thursday it was an ornament for my hair, and yesterday it was his portrait set as a brooch. Would you like to see it?"

"Indeed, yes—if you do not mind the trouble of bringing it!"

"Oh, my bedroom is next to yours, and the case lies on the table. I shall not be a moment!"

And with this she flitted away, and came back with the portrait in her hand.

"Mind," said she, with a somewhat embarrassed gaiety, "you must tell me exactly what you think of him—I bargain for that."

I took it, glanced at it, and, taken by surprise, uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Is it possible," I cried, "that he is as old as this?"

She looked down, and bit her lip.

"He is not old," she said. "At least, not so *very* old! He is a year younger than papa."

"A year younger than papa," I repeated. "Oh, Hilda!"

"And his features are very fine. Indeed, he is still considered a remarkably handsome man."

"And you love him?"

"Yes—that is to say, I love him—of course I love him. Quite as much as—as I ought. Why not?"

I continued looking at the portrait, and made no reply.

"Besides," added my sister, getting more and more piqued, "we do not live in the times of the Troubadours and Crusaders, or expect to find Leanders and Romeos every day at our feet. Matters are differently managed in the *beau monde*, my dear; and people who marry for rank and wealth are not supposed to be dying for love! The Count is very generous, very gentlemanly, highly *distingué*, and quite rich enough for my ambition. What more could one desire?"

"What more? Nay, no more, if this be sufficient."

"Sufficient? Why, Barbara, how absurd you are! Do you think I would marry, if I were not quite sure of being happy? I tell you that I like the Count very much, and that he adores me. I know that, as his wife, I shall never have a desire ungratified. I shall have a Hôtel in Paris, and a villa in Florence; I shall travel; I shall go into the best society; I shall become a leader of the

fashion; and have as much money as I care to spend!"

"And that will make you happy?"

"Happy? Perfectly happy. Oh, you do not know all that I intend to do! I mean to dress better than Madame de Bernard—to give more elegant *soirées* than the Vicomtesse de St. Etienne —to . . . . . but I have not told you where the Count is to take me for our wedding tour! Guess."

"How should I guess, dear? Perhaps to Naples and Sicily."

"Naples and Sicily at this time of the year? Why, one might as well take apartments in the crater of Vesuvius, at once! No—no, Barbara. Guess again."

"Well—Switzerland."

"Too vulgar. Everyone goes to Switzerland in the autumn."

"Nay, then, I am utterly at a loss. Spain, I suppose, would not be cool enough, nor Scotland genteel enough, to please you. If it be not Vienna and the Danube, I will give it up."

"It is neither Spain, nor Scotland, nor Vienna; but Norway! What say you to Norway? Is it not a magnificent idea?"

"It is indeed. Was it your own?"

"Entirely. The Count asked me where I

should like to go, and so I took the map, and studied the matter thoroughly. It must not be very far South, I said, on account of the autumnal heat; and it must not be on the beaten track, because I should like to do something original. And then I decided upon Norway."

"*Eh bien!* When does the wedding take place?"

"To-morrow week—or, rather, this day week; for it is three hours past midnight!"

"And it will be a grand affair, no doubt?"

"Yes—as grand as we can afford to make it; but papa's means, you know, are not great, and though Mrs. Churchill is well off, one does not like to owe too much to her bounty. However, the Count will bear a part of the expense. We shall be married first at the Protestant Chapel in the Rue du Chaillot, and from thence go on to the Church of Nôtre Dame de Lorette for the Roman Catholic ceremony. I am to wear white Brussels lace over white gros de Naples, and a veil to match. The lace is a present from the Count, and Mrs. Churchill says it cannot have cost less than three thousand francs! But it is shamefully late, and I am tired to death; and you, by the by, have been travelling."

"Yes, I have come between four and five hundred miles in three days."

"'Poor child! And all alone, too."

"Not alone. I had an escort all the way."

"That was fortunate. Some acquaintance, I suppose, of Madame Brenner? Ah, *mon Dieu!* I had almost forgotten the existence of Madame Brenner. Does the College still stand in the old place, and are the rolls on Monday mornings as stale as ever?"

"Everything is as you left it," I replied, with a sigh.

"*Ainsi soit il!* Now good night!"

I embraced her silently, and, as she left the room, followed her with my eyes, and sighed again. Was it possible that she could be happy? She seemed so—and yet .... and yet it was but a bartering of her youth and beauty! Money, dress, position, and the empty vanity of a title—these were her Gods, and to these she offered herself as a sacrifice. For her, neither the woman's dream of love, nor the artist's lofty ambition—for her, neither the poetry, nor the purity, nor the passion that makes life beautiful, and marriage holy! Instead of home, she had chosen society—instead of love, the admiration, or envy, of a careless world—instead of Paradise, the mirage of the desert, fruitless as the sands, and fleeting as the mists that paint it on the poisoned air!

Alas, poor Hilda!

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE OPERA FRANÇAISE.

THE next day, when we were assembled in the drawing-room before dinner, waiting the arrival of the Count de Chaumont, my father took a card from his waistcoat pocket and handed it to Hilda, saying—

"This was left for you to-day, by a gentleman on horseback. Who is he? I do not remember the name."

"Nor I," replied my sister, and passed it to Mrs. Churchill. "It must have been for mamma."

Mrs. Churchill looked at it languidly, through her double eye-glass, and shook her head.

"Never heard of him in my life," she murmured, and leaned back again in the corner of the sofa.

My father put on his spectacles, and took the card over to the window.

"I feel convinced, Hilda," said he, "that the visit was for you. You must have been introduced to this person last evening at the Prussian embassy; for I was in the breakfast-room when he called, and I heard him inquire if you were fatigued this morning. Just consider. Whom did you meet last evening?"

"Very few English," said she, "and none whom I had not met before."

"Humph! It is scarcely an English name—more likely Scotch, by the sound of it. Farquhar! Farquhar . . . let me see, there was a Captain Farquharson of—no, that can have nothing to do with it. How singular!"

My heart beat, and my colour rose in spite of me.

"If it be Mr. Farquhar of Broomhill," I said, nervously, "the card was left for me. He accompanied me from Zollenstrasse to Paris."

They all turned and looked at me, and Hilda burst out laughing.

"Brava, Barbara!" she exclaimed. "You begin well. Why, how you blush! Who is this Mr. Farquhar?"

"Yes, who *is* this Mr. Farquhar?" repeated my father, drawing himself to his full height, and as-

suming his most dignified deportment. "Who *is* this Mr. Farquhar, that he should think fit to call at my house without an introduction? What did Madame Brenner know of him, that she should entrust my daughter to his care? I am not fond of these English frequenters of petty German spas."

"Mr. Farquhar is a gentleman of family and fortune," I replied; "a great traveller, and a patron of the fine arts. He was constantly in the society of the Grand Duke; and dined frequently at the Residenz, during his stay at Zollenstrasse."

"And that is all that anyone knows about him, eh?"

"By no means, sir," I said, firmly. "His estates join those of Mrs. Sandyshaft; and I know every inch of Broomhill as well as I know the College in which I have been brought up."

My father coughed, and looked disconcerted.

"Is this old friend of yours a young man, Barbara?" asked my sister, satirically.

"About thirty-four."

"And tolerably well off?"

"I remember that he once gave six thousand pounds for a picture."

Mrs. Churchill and Hilda exchanged glances. My father rang the bell, and desired Bruce to fetch a certain book from a certain shelf in the little closet which they dignified by the name of the

study. It was a thick volume in an old-fashioned calf binding with red edges, and my father, as he turned over the leaves, took occasion to inform us of its contents.

"This book," said he, "gives a brief account of the old county families of England. It goes wherever I go. So does the peerage, and so does the baronetage; but this, in ordinary cases, is the most useful of the three. It tells one who is who, which is no trifling advantage abroad, and . . . Ah! here we have it. 'Farquhar of Broomhill' —humph!—take Broomhill as a kind of title, like the Scotch lairds; very curious that! 'One of the oldest families of East Anglia'—'possessions considerably increased during the last half-century' —'present owner married to Lucy, eldest daughter of J. Clive, Esq., M.P.—rental from twelve to fourteen thousand per annum' . . . So, your friend is married, Barbara?"

"No, sir. I think if you look to the date . . ."

"True—the book has been published these twenty-five or thirty years. Then the present man is the son of this Farquhar and Lucy his wife—I see! And what do you say is his age?"

"About thirty-four, I believe."

My father looked at me thoughtfully, and clinked the money in his pockets.

"Fourteen thousand a year is no such undesir-

able income!" said he, more to himself than me. "Ha!—four—teen thou—sand; and thir—ty-three years of age!"

Mrs. Churchill smiled, and nodded—(she had the art of implying a nod with her eyelids, which saved trouble, and looked *distingué*)—but Hilda, with a satirical laugh, repeated my father's last words.

"Fourteen thousand and thirty-three years of age would alone be a guarantee of respectability!" said she. "No occasion to look in your county book, papa, when a man is his own ancestry, and dates himself back to the Pre-Adamite world!"

My father's brow darkened. According to his creed, all jesting was undignified; but a jest at his expense, or a play upon his words, was an offence little short of treason. Just, however, as he was about to speak, the door opened, and Bruce announced—

"Monsieur the Count de Chaumont."

A tall grave man, with a conical bald head and a huge white moustache, came into the room with his hat under his arm, and one glove dangling in his hand. Anything more stiff, polite, and diplomatic it would be impossible to conceive. He bowed profoundly to Mrs. Churchill; he bowed profoundly to my father; he carried Hilda's hand to his lips; and, being introduced to me, he bowed

again. This done, he sat down and said nothing, till we were summoned to the dinner-room.

The dinner passed off grimly. My father was still annoyed; Hilda seemed out of temper with herself and everyone; and the Count, who had no conversation, stared incessantly at Hilda with his round light eyes, and adored her in silence.

After dinner, we went up to dress for the opera.

It was an event in my life, and I had been anticipating it the whole day long; so, when Mademoiselle Juliette insisted upon dressing me in a pink silk of my sister's, with trimmings of flowers, and ribbons, and all kinds of unaccustomed fineries, I submitted with slight resistance. In one matter only I would have my will; and that was in wearing my hair as I had always worn it, twisted plainly round a comb, and waving round my forehead in its own uncontrolled luxuriance.

At half-past eight o'clock we all went down to the theatre in the Count's carriage, and the overture was just ending as we came into the box.

Mrs. Churchill and Hilda took the front seats, and I placed myself behind them, where I had a good view of the stage. The curtain rose upon a crowded scene—the first chords of a chorus broke forth at once from a couple of hundred voices—a procession of monks and soldiers came winding down a rocky pass at the back—and one singer,

more richly dressed than the rest, advanced to the footlights. I could scarcely breathe, for wonder and delight; but listened in a kind of ecstasy.

"Is this Mario?" I asked, laying my hand on Hilda's shoulder.

"Mario?" she repeated. "How absurd! This is the Opera Française. Don't you hear that they are singing in French?"

"I had not observed it. I thought it was the Italian theatre. How should I know?"

"How should you know? Why, everyone knows that the Italian season only lasts from October to March! How stupid you are!"

I drew back, pained and surprised.

"Two months ago, Hilda," I said, "you knew as little of these matters as myself."

And so the conversation dropped. Her mood puzzled me. Last evening, when she came to my bedroom in her ball-dress, she seemed kind, and gay, and, as I then thought, more than usually affectionate; but now .... But now the novelty and splendour of the theatre gave me no time for anything but admiration; so I dismissed the subject.

To this day I remember nothing but the bewilderment with which I gazed and listened. I can recall neither the names of the singers, nor the plot, nor the title of the piece, nor anything

but the result produced upon myself. Perhaps had I never seen any kind of theatre, I should have expected more, and have been less delighted; but I had formed my notions of the stage upon our little establishment at Zollenstrasse, and the contrast took me by surprise. These masterly effects of light and distance; the grandeur of the grouping; the variety of costume; the richness and harmony of colour; and, above all, the wonderfully artistic beauty of the scenery, dazzled me on the side of pictorial illusion, and carried me out of myself. I could hardly believe that all was not real—that these moving masses of soldiers, nobles, and priests were not actual characters, swayed by actual passions, and acted upon by the very "form and pressure" of the time! I could still less believe that these airy distances and Claude-like vales, these palace-fronts, and endless corridors, were mere daubs of paint and canvas, to be looked upon from afar. All seemed perfect, real, wonderful; and when the curtain fell upon the first act, I felt as Ferdinand might have felt when Prospero suddenly dismissed "into thin air" his masque of spirits.

Mrs. Churchill tapped me on the cheek, and smiled benevolently.

"It is quite a luxury, my dear child," said she,

"to witness your pleasure. Come now to the front of the box, and look round the house. This is the interval when everybody criticises everybody. What say you to the Parisian *toilettes*?"

"I like the play much better," I replied. "Will they soon begin again?"

"Yes—in about ten minutes. Hilda, my sweet love, who is that distinguished-looking man in the second row of stalls? His glass has been levelled at our box for the last three minutes.

Involuntarily, I looked in the direction indicated. The gentleman lowered his glass, and bowed immediately.

"It is Mr. Farquhar," I said, with something of a childish triumph; and returned his salutation.

"Mr. Farquhar?" repeated my father, and Hilda, and Mrs. Churchill, in one breath. "Is that Mr. Farquhar?"—and pressed forward to look at him.

"A very gentlemanly person, upon my word," said my father, approvingly. "Really, a very gentlemanly person."

"But excessively plain," added Hilda.

"Nay, not 'excessively,' my love," said Mrs. Churchill. "Not 'excessively' by any means. Rather a—if I may so express it—a prepossessing plainness; and decidedly aristocratic!"

"*Mais oui—c'est un Monsieur très comme il faut,*" chimed in the Count, with a glance towards the mirror at the side of the box.

"I—ahem!—I really am of opinion," said my father, "that, considering all Mr. Farquhar's attention to Barbara, I might, with propriety, go down and express my sense of obligation in person. What do you say, Mrs. Churchill?"

"That it would be only correct to do so; and, Mr. Churchill, bring him here if you can!"

So my father took his hat, and went down, and we saw him presently in conversation with that very Mr. Farquhar who had "thought fit" to call at his house without an introduction. So much for position, and a rental of twelve or fourteen thousand per annum! In the course of a few minutes they left the stalls and came up to our box; where Hugh Farquhar was formally introduced.

"Delighted, I am sure," murmured Mrs. Churchill, with her most benignant smile. "Gentleman of Mr. Farquhar's position and taste—kind attentions to our darling girl—charmed with the opportunity of expressing our gratitude. Barbara, my love—a seat for Mr. Farquhar!"

"I think," said he, "that I have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Churchill before."

Mrs. Churchill suspended the dexterous flutter

of her fan, and expressed interrogation with her eyebrows.

"At Homburg," replied Hugh, "if I remember rightly; about four years ago."

"I did once visit Homburg in the spring," hesitated Mrs. Churchill, "and it was probably about that time; but I am ashamed to confess that . . . ."

"Oh, Madam, I did not imply that I had had the honour of an introduction! There are persons whom to see is to remember."

Mrs. Churchill bowed, and tried to look as if she blushed. Her good opinion was won for ever. Hugh turned to me as the curtain rose, and withdrew to the back of the box.

"Why, Barbarina," he said, "you are transformed to-night! Where is the Jenny Wren dress? I seem scarcely to know you in any other."

"I scarcely know myself, Mr. Farquhar," I replied. "I like my brown feathers better than all this gay plumage."

"So do I—and yet, somehow, it pleases me to see you thus. It looks young and bright; and heaven knows that you are young and bright enough! Never so bright, I fancy, as to-night."

"That is because I have been so much excited."

"By the music?"

"No—strangely enough; not so much by the music, as by the grandeur of the scenes and cos-

tumes. I cannot describe to you how these have affected me. Each time the curtain rises, I feel as if a window were opened into fairy land!"

"That is because your artistic perceptions are more highly educated than your ear. Your sense of colour, of form, of composition, is being perpetually gratified; and each scene presents you with a gallery of living pictures. For my part, I am more influenced by the music; and yet I love art almost as well as you love it. How do you account for that?"

"Easily enough. Your tastes are variously cultivated, and your judgment is matured. Amid many things, you know how to choose the best, and, having chosen, accept the rest as adjuncts."

"Excellently reasoned!" exclaimed Hugh; "and truly reasoned, too. How is it that you are so good a logician?

"I am no logician, Mr. Farquhar. How should I be?"

"Nay, how should you not be, being an artist? It is the power of rightly seeing Nature that makes the painter; and to see rightly with the eyes of the body, is surely but a stepping-stone to seeing rightly with the eyes of the mind."

"I am not so sure of that," I replied laughingly. "Between a landscape and a proposition there is a considerable difference. But the scene changes . . .

oh, how lovely! See, the light absolutely flickers on that water—the gondola casts a reflection that moves with it—the moon goes behind a cloud! Can this be art?"

"Not high art, certainly," replied Hugh.

"Because it is higher than art! It is nature herself! Oh, Mr. Farquhar, I feel as if I should never care to paint again, after this!"

"You are a foolish child, and know not what you say," said he, impatiently. "I tell you this is not pure art—nay, it is but one third art, and two thirds machinery. This ripple is produced by moving lights behind the canvas, and that moon is made of muslin and gas! All that you see here is imitation; and art does not imitate—it interprets."

"Hush—do not destroy the illusion!"

"I am willing to leave you the illusion, Barbarina; but I cannot suffer you to mistake illusion for art."

"Suffer me, then, to mistake it for nature."

"Worse again! Learn to accept it for what it is. Accept it as an ingenious and beautiful background to a fine story; and remember that mock moons and practicable waves bear to true painting the same relation that wax-modelling bears to sculpture. But silence for a moment. I want you to hear this *duo*."

I leaned back, and listened. The audience was

profoundly silent, and a semi-darkness prevailed in every part of the theatre. In the orchestra only a single harp was heard, and to this accompaniment the two voices rose and fell, mingled and parted, threaded all the involutions of harmony and all the mazes of passion, and died away at last, tremblingly, throbbingly, wearily—like a whirlwind wasted of its fury, or a heart of its desire!

Then came a moment of intense suspense, and then, before the last vibration seemed quite to have faded from the air, a storm of applause that shook the very chandeliers above our heads!

"Well, Barbara," murmured Hugh, bending so low that I felt his breath upon my shoulder; "is this true art, think you? But, child, you are weeping!"

I raised my hand to my cheek, and found it wet with tears.

"I did not know it," I faltered. "It was so wild and sad, that . . . ."

"That, like Jessica, you are 'never merry when you hear sweet music!' Tender little heart! it is as susceptible to all the influences of feeling, as a flower to the changes of the sky!"

There was a strange, caressing gentleness in his voice, as he said this, which brought my colour back and made me tremble. Involuntarily, I looked up to see if any one were listening; but my father

was gone; the Count de Chaumont was talking in an undertone to Hilda; and Mrs. Churchill's eyes were discreetly fixed upon the stage.

"I did not think to see you here to-night, Barbara," he continued—"still less to be so near you."

"I am very glad .... it was so good of you to come up. You had a much better place in the stalls."

"That is a matter of opinion, *carina*. I have the bad taste to prefer this. But, tell me, were you up this morning when I called?"

"Yes; but I never heard of your visit till many hours after. Papa thought at first that you left your card for Hilda."

"Cupid and the Count forbid! *Mais, dites donc*, how do you fancy your future brother-in-law?"

I sighed, and shook my head.

"Yes," he said, "it is a sacrifice.

'Crabbed age and youth
Cannot live together.'

I never could understand the loves of Goethe and Bettina! Your father, by the way, is polite enough to invite me to the wedding; and also to dine with him to-morrow."

"And you will come?"

"To-morrow—yes."

"And to the wedding?"

"If I can; but I may be far, far hence, ere then; where no echoes of marriage bells can follow me!"

"So soon, Mr. Farquhar?"

"So late, you mean! There, let us say no more of it. I am not yet gone."

"But you are going!"

"I am going—yes, I am going, 'sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means to do it.' Strength, do I say? Pshaw! the words are not mine, but Hamlet's!"

Startled by the vehemence of his manner, I drew back and looked at him; but he turned his face quickly away, and said no more. Just at this moment the curtain fell again, and he took the opportunity to leave us. As he made his adieux, I saw that he looked pale and disturbed; but no one else observed it. Mrs. Churchill gave him her hand.

"Then to-morrow, at seven o'clock, Mr. Farquhar," said she, "we may expect to be indulged with the pleasure of your society?"

"To-morrow at seven, Madam, the indulgence will be yours—the pleasure mine."

Saying this, he bowed over her hand, as though it had been the hand of an Empress, and touched

it with his lips. To Hilda he bowed also, but more distantly, and from me he parted silently, with a warm pressure of the hand.

"My dear Barbara," sighed Mrs. Churchill, as the door closed behind him, "that is the most elegant, the most aristocratic, the most gentlemanly man I have met for many a season! I am not given to sudden prepossessions—far from it!—but I protest that with Mr. Farquhar I am positively fascinated!"

"*Mais oui*," repeated the Count. "*C'est un Monsieur très comme il faut.*"

"Quite the tone of high society!" said Mrs. Churchill.

"*Tout-à-fait*," replied the Count sententiously.

"And evidently a person of education and judgment. But, my darling Hilda, you say nothing?"

"Because I have nothing to say," retorted my sister, with a scornful smile. "Your *rara avis* appears to me to be a very ordinary biped."

Mrs. Churchill's colour rose. She leaned back, toyed with her glass, and said, in her most measured accents—

"Your mistake, my love, arises from ignorance of the world. You have yet much to learn; but you are improving."

Hilda bit her lip, and turned to the stage with an impatient gesture; the Count looked puzzled; and

Mrs. Churchill smiled in the calm consciousness of victory.

As for me, I scarcely heeded their conversation. My eyes were fixed upon Mr. Farquhar's vacant stall; but he occupied it no more that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOMESTIC DETAILS.

"WE are appreciated," writes a cynic, "not for what we are, but for what others think of us."

And my belief in that maxim dates from the time when Hugh Farquhar became known to my family. They respected him on account of his position; they liked him because he was pleased to exert himself to make them do so; and the result of all this was that I came in for some share of their good opinion. He was attentive to me; and they became considerate. He loved to talk with me; and therefore they began to suppose that I might have some kind of cleverness. He praised me; and they discovered that I was amiable. In a few days my position at home was radically

changed. I found myself listened to, consulted, placed on an equal footing with Hilda, and in all respects treated as it was pleasant to be treated. The morning after we had been to the theatre, my father called me into his "study," and gave me a cheque for six hundred francs, intimating that I was to use that sum for my present necessities, that I should have more in the course of a couple of days, and that I was to be sure and make "as good an appearance" as my sister. Mrs. Churchill, not to be outdone in generosity, presented me with a bracelet of mosaic-work, and devoted one whole morning to accompany me in my shopping—on which occasion, however, I persisted, to her great dismay, in preferring a plain brown silk of rich quality, to all the delicate light fabrics which were put before me. In vain she argued that it looked too sober, and old, and sombre for my wearing. I was determined to adhere to my "Jenny Wren' colours, at all events on ordinary occasions, and only consented to purchase lighter materials for the wedding, on condition that I retained the one dress in which I knew *he* would prefer to see me.

Altogether, I was much happier in my home relations than I had ever been before; I should have been happier still, but for the daily and increasing coldness with which Hilda treated me. Communicative and pleasant on the night of my

arrival, she was now fretful, impatient, and reserved. Nothing that I did was right—nothing that I said pleased her. She could scarcely hear Hugh Farquhar's name without some sarcastic or depreciatory remark. One might almost have believed that she hated him for being my friend, and me for the consideration with which he treated me. As for the renovation of my wardrobe, and my father's recommendation to make "as good an appearance" as herself, she laughed it to scorn, and protested that it was the most ridiculous arrangement she had heard in her life. Considering that she was to be married within a week, and that none of these domestic trifles could be of import to her in her new sphere, I thought her remarks on this head singularly illiberal. Even the poor Count received his share of her displeasure, and led, at this time, the most miserable life in the world. She quarrelled with him continually; if quarrelling it can be called, where on one side all is tyranny, and on the other all submission. I even fancied, more than once, that she had conceived some strange and sudden dislike to him, and would fain have got rid of him if she could!

In the meantime the days went by, and the eventful one drew nearer. The breakfast was ordered from Tortoni's—the passports of M. le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Chaumont

were made out for Norway. The light travelling-carriage which was to accompany them for their use in a country where railroads and comfortable post-chaises were unknown, had been brought round for Hilda's inspection, and dismissed with approval. The guests were invited to the number of forty in the morning, and one hundred in the evening. And, above all, Sir Agamemnon Churchill —he whose glory had been the tradition of our childhood; whose portrait (as the knave of clubs) hung in the place of honour in our London home; whose position as a knight, a herald, and an archæologist placed him at the head of all that now remained of our branch of the great Marlborough family—Sir Agamemnon Churchill himself, was coming, in his own august person, to grace our wedding feast, and give the bride away!

And all this time Hugh Farquhar came and went as he pleased, and became our frequent guest. He talked politics and the wars of Queen Anne with my father. He was gallant to Mrs. Churchill. He was polite and stately with the Count. Sometimes I fancied that he knew how his friendship had led them to be kinder to me . . . at all events I heard no more about St. Petersburgh!

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE FOREST OF VINCENNES.

It was the morning of Hilda's wedding day. The bride was dressed; the carriages were at the door; the guests were assembled; and we only waited for Sir Agamemnon Churchill. A messenger from Meurice's had brought word of his arrival late the night before; and as it had been arranged that Hilda was not to make her appearance till he came, she and I remained upstairs listening to the echo of every passing wheel. Now and then one of the bridesmaids came up, or we heard my father's impatient voice upon the landing; and still we waited, and still the great man of the family kept us in suspense.

Hilda looked ill and agitated; but haughtily

beautiful as ever. She had scarcely slept at all the night before. I had heard her in her room, and seen the light under her door long hours after midnight; but, deterred by her coldness, had not ventured to intrude on her privacy.

Now, white and silent, with her hands locked fast together, she stood before the glass, seeming to look at her own image, but seeing only vacancy. Thus the last anxious quarter of an hour ebbed slowly away; and then, at the very moment when to have delayed longer would have been impossible, a carriage dashed up to the door, and a servant came running breathlessly to tell us that "Sir Agamemnon was come!"

Finding my sister still unmoved, I went over and repeated the message.

"Sir Agamemnon is here," I said. "We must go down."

She started, and, as it were mechanically, took her gloves and bouquet from the table.

"And it is very late," I added.

"Late indeed," she echoed, drearily. "Too late!" and moved towards the door. At the threshold she paused, stooped forward all at once, and kissed me.

"Sister," she said, hurriedly, "forgive me! I have not been kind; but my life has been a hell

this past week! I have hated myself and all the world!"

"Oh, Hilda!"

"Yes—I see it all now; but it is too late—too late! Your future is bright, Barbara. You love each other—you will be very happy, My future is dark enough—God help me!"

And with this she drew her veil about her face, and went downstairs.

I followed her, with her last words echoing in my ears, and my heart beating painfully. The first face I saw as I went into the room was Mr. Farquhar's. He was standing just inside the door, and, as I came in, put out both his hands, and smiled joyously.

"*Eccolà!*" he said, surveying me from head to foot. "Why, what a dainty, coquettish, charming little Barbara it is to-day! Quite a dangerous Barbara, I vow! But why so pale and nervous, *petite?* Your hands tremble—you are not well! Is anything wrong?"

I shook my head—I dared not look at him, remembering the words that Hilda had just spoken.

"Nothing is wrong," I said, and turned hastily away—too hastily as I fancied; for when I had threaded my way half-across the room, I turned, and saw him following me with his eyes, so gravely, so inquiringly, that had I known how to say it, I

should have gone back and asked his pardon. As it was, our eyes met just as my father took me by the hand and said:—

"My second daughter, Sir Agamemnon. Barbara, make Sir Agamemnon Churchill welcome to Paris."

A shrunken, under-sized, dissipated-looking old beau of the Prince Regent type, was my illustrious kinsman; with little, bold, bloodshot eyes, and a flushed face, and a withered double chin buried behind a huge white satin cravat sprigged with gold. He had been a 'ladies' man,' a 'buck,' and a leader of the 'ton,' some five and forty years ago; and now, wigged, laced, padded, scented, dyed, and 'used-up,' he clung fondly to the traditions of his youth and his '*bonnes fortunes*.' He tied his neckcloth in the Brummel bow, and wore three inside waistcoats and a mulberry coat with a velvet collar as high as his ears. In short, he looked as if he might just have stepped out from the Pavilion at Brighton, or have come straight from a breakfast at Carlton House!

Curtseying, I murmured something, I scarcely know what; but he interrupted me by kissing first my hand, and then my cheek, and protesting that he was "devilish glad" to see me, and that "a fellow might be devilish proud of two such pretty cousins—begad!"

One wedding is just like another, and the only respect in which this differed from most lay in the fact that it was celebrated in two churches, in two languages, and in two religions. Nobody shed tears, for we were late and had no time for sentiment. As it was, we dashed through the streets at a pace better becoming an elopement than a wedding, and overturned a flower-stall at the corner of the Place de la Madeleine. Then the bride and bridegroom drove back alone in the Count's carriage, and we, having quite lost the order of going, followed as we pleased, taking whatever vehicles and companions we could get. Thus it happened that Mr. Farquhar found his way to the bridesmaids' carriage, and came back in the seat beside my own.

Then came the congratulations, the breakfast, the champagne, and the speeches—most notable of all, that speech of Sir Agamemnon Churchill's, in which he brought a very rambling oration to a close by saying that he had that morning performed the most disagreeable task he had ever undertaken in his life:—

"For, ladies and gentlemen," said he, looking round to enjoy the surprise with which this observation was received, and nursing his final joke till the last moment, "when I came to give the bride

away, begad! I was devilish sorry I couldn't keep her myself!"

Which delicate and ingenious witticism was greeted with immense applause (as well by the foreigners who didn't understand it, as by the English who did), and covered Sir Agamemnon with glory.

Then the Count de Chaumont, in three or four very brief and solemn sentences, returned thanks for himself and his bride; and then my father, with a great deal of self-possession and dignity, made a speech full of point and emphasis, which threw all the rest into the shade, and produced the great effect of the day. After this, the ladies withdrew, and Hilda went up to change her dress for the journey.

Her pallor, her agitation, her despair, were all gone now; but her cheek was flushed, and her eye strangely bright and restless. In vain I looked for any trace of the emotion which had so startled me a few hours back. Not a glance, not a tone, betrayed that she even remembered it Thus she dressed and went down in all the splendour of her proud beauty. Thus she embraced us, was handed into her carriage by the husband of her choice, and drove away. The game was played out. The stakes were won. She was Madame la Comtesse de Chaumont!

After this, the guests mostly dispersed—some to their avocations, and some to amuse themselves, till it became time to dress for the evening party. My father and Sir Agamemnon, and three or four of the elder men, chiefly members of my father's club, went out to play at billiards or stroll in the Champs Elysées. Mrs. Churchill, whose delicate nervous system was supposed to be overwrought by the morning's excitement, retired to her room, and had a sound sleep on the sofa; whilst we three bridesmaids, Hugh Farquhar, a pretty widow named Julie de Luneville, the Count de Charlot, Monsieur de Fauval, and some three or four other young men, all of whom were frequent guests at Mrs. Churchill's receptions, drove over to Vincennes. When we reached the forest, we left our vehicles at a certain spot, and alighted. It was now between three and four o'clock, and the slanting light came goldenly through the trees, and lay in broad patches on the open glades. The place was very quiet and lovely, and we sat on the fragrant grass under the shade of oaks as old as the far-away towers of Nôtre Dame. Here the young men lit their cigars, and the ladies took off their bonnets; and some flirted, and some ate bonbons, and we were all as sociable as if we had known each other from childhood. As for Hugh Farquhar, I had never before seen him

give such play to his exuberant animal spirits. He jested; told stories; talked as readily in French as in English, and in German as in either; and was the very life of the party. Buoyant, almost boyish, in his gaiety, he seemed as if he had that morning drunk of the Elixir of Life.

My recollection of the general conversation as we sat there on the grass, like a group by Watteau, is now somewhat confused and fragmentary; but we had been talking, I think, of park and forest scenery, and Hugh had been telling us something of his wild wanderings in South America.

"It always seems to me," said he, as he lay reclining on his elbow, "that a forest is a school of etiquette, and that nothing could be more natural than for Hazlitt to take off his hat to a certain majestic oak whenever he passed it, as he tells us somewhere in his Essays. See the great elms, how polite they are! How they bow their plumed heads, and stretch out their stately arms to one another! For my part, I never enter a forest without feeling at once that I am moving in the best society."

They smiled at this; and some one observed that "it was a pity the trees limited their courtesies to their own circles."

"How agreeable it would be, for instance," said Monsieur de Fauval, a dramatic author and *feuil-*

letoniste, "if some of the more hospitable among our present hosts would unpack their trunks just now, and oblige us with a few ices and a dozen cups of coffee!"

"Or if the woodpecker would make himself useful, and tap us some good old Burgundy from his 'hollow beech-tree!'" added Hugh. "But whom have we here? A *Jongleur* of the olden time?"

"Say, rather, an Orpheus of shreds and patches!"

It was a wandering musician, with a guitar slung over his shoulder. Seeing our carriages before the gates, he had sought us out through the pathways of the forest. Timidly, he took off his battered cap, and passed his fingers over the strings of his instrument.

"*Chantez donc!*" said one of the young men, tossing him a franc for encouragement.

He looked up, bowed, preluded a few chords, and sang, with a slightly foreign accent, three or four verses of a plaintive ballad, the refrain of which was always—

"File, file, pauvre Marie,
Pour secourir le prisonnier;
File, file, pauvre Marie,
File, file pour le prisonnier!"

The guitar was cracked; but the song had truth

of feeling, and the singer, voice and sentiment. After he had finished, we were silent.

Then somebody signed to him to continue, and he sang a little rhyming Biscayan romance about a fisherman and a phantom ship—a mere story to a fragmentary chant; but wild as the winds, and melancholy as the moaning of the sea.

When he had done, Mr. Farquhar beckoned to him to come nearer.

"Your music is of the saddest, friend," said he. "Can you sing nothing gay?"

The man shook his head.

"*Monsieur*," he replied, "*je ne suis pas gai.*"

The answer provoked our curiosity, and we urged him to tell us his history; but we urged in vain.

"I have nothing to tell," he said. "I am poor, and a wanderer."

"But are you French?" asked one.

"I do not come from these parts," he replied, equivocally. "*Bonjour, Messieurs et Mesdames.*"

He was going; but Mr. Farquhar stopped him.

"Stay, *mon ami*," said he. "I have a fancy to try your guitar."

The musician unslung and handed it to him, with an apologetic shrug.

"It is not good," he remonstrated humbly.

"Nay, it has seen honourable service," said Hugh, "and has been excellent. It was made, I see, in Naples."

The man looked down, and made no reply.

"Sing something, Mr. Farquhar!" cried three or four together.

He smiled, and ran his fingers over the strings with a touch that evoked more tone than one could have expected from so poor an instrument.

"What shall I sing?" said he.

Some asked for one thing; some for another. I who had never dreamt till this moment that he had any musical knowledge, remained silent.

"*Eh bien!*" he exclaimed. "I will give you a Spanish *ballata*—something very savage about a bull-fight. It is supposed to be sung by a girl who is sitting among the spectators, and whose lover is a matador in the arena. You will hear how she cries to him to kill the bull, '*por l'amor de Dios!*'"

And with this he struck the strings with the side of his hand, producing a strange barbaric jangle, and broke out into the wildest rush of words and notes that I had ever heard in my life. Well might he call it "something savage!" It made my heart throb, and my blood run cold, and, which is more, produced some such effect on the rest; for, when it was over, we looked in each

other's faces, and drew a long breath of relief.

"*Mais, mon Dieu!* Monsieur Farquhar," said Madame de Luneville, "do you wish us all to be afraid of you? Where, in Heaven's name, did you learn that diabolical song?"

"In Madrid," replied he, laughingly, "where it is as popular in the most refined *salons* as in the lowest *posadas*. My teacher was an Andalusian water-carrier, who, after plying his trade all day long in the Puerta del Sol, used 'to sing songs o' nights,' sitting on the steps of a public fountain, and surrounded by all the ragamuffins of the quarter."

"How picturesque!" I exclaimed; for the whole group came at once before my eyes.

"Yes; it was an animated Murillo. But, since I have shocked you with my savage performance, I will soothe you with something sweet and sentimental."

Whereupon he modulated through a succession of keys, and, to a soft *arpeggio* accompaniment, sang, with infinite tenderness and passion, the following

SERENADE.*

"The winds are all hush'd, and the moon is high,
Like a queen on her silver throne!

* The words of this song are copyright, and have been set to music by Mr. J. F. Duggan.

Tranquil and dusk the woodlands lie;
Scarcely a cloud sails over the sky;
None are awake, save the stars and I—
Sleepest thou still, mine own?

"The song of the nightingale stirs the air,
And the breath of the briar is blown!
Come forth in thy beauty beyond compare;
I'll clasp thee close, and I'll call thee fair;
And I'll kiss off the dew from thy golden hair—
Sleepest thou still, mine own?"

Again there was a long-drawn breath when he had ended, but this time it was a breath of approbation. Monsieur de Fauval was the first to speak.

"That song," said he, "breathes the very soul of passion. Whose is it? Where can it be purchased?"

"It cannot be purchased at all," replied Hugh, smiling. "It is an unpublished manuscript."

"And the author?"

"Unknown."

"Unknown!" repeated Madame de Luneville. "But you are in the secret?"

"Of course I am, or else how should I have known it? But enough of *al fresco* music. The grass is already getting damp, and we must not suffer these ladies to take cold. Many thanks, friend, for the use of your instrument."

And with this he returned the guitar to its owner, and took out a handful of loose silver.

The musician drew back.

"Thanks, Monsieur," he said. "I am already sufficiently paid."

"Nay—for the loan of the guitar."

The stranger drew himself up, and with a gesture full of dignity, again refused.

"My guitar," said he, "is not only my *gagne-pain;* but my friend. Monsieur did me the honour to borrow it."

Hugh rose from his half-recumbent attitude.

"In that case," he said, courteously, "I wish you *bon voyage.*"

The stranger murmured something of which we lost the purport; and, with one low, comprehensive bow, slung his guitar once more across his back, and turned away. At the bend of the path, he paused, looked back, and then disappeared among the trees.

"There is something odd about that man!" said the Count de Charlot. "I would give a hundred francs to know his story."

"If you gave a thousand, he would not tell it," said De Fauval. "I believe that he is an escaped convict from Toulon or Brest."

"And I, that he is a political exile," said Madame de Luneville.

"He certainly is not a Frenchman," observed another. "Did you notice how he evaded the question, when he was asked his country?"

"Yes—and how silent he was when Mr. Farquhar examined his guitar!"

"Poor fellow!" said Hugh. "He is no common adventurer; and by his accent, I should say he is Italian. He refused my little *obolus* with an almost Roman dignity. But what is your opinion, Barbarina?"

"Indeed I scarcely know," I replied. "The expression of his eyes struck me painfully. I feel sorry for him, and . . . but you will laugh at me, if I tell you that!"

"No—I promise not to laugh. Pray tell me."

"Well, then, I feel as if . . . as if the sight of him were unlucky—as if . . . I scarcely know what I mean, or how to say it; but as if he brought some shadow of trouble with him! Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly; and think I can account for it, too. We were very gay when he came and sobered us. Those sobering processes are not pleasant. The time has gone by when a skeleton was looked upon as an agreeable addition to a dinner-party. But we may as well talk of something more agreeable!"

He had given me his arm, and we were now

strolling, two and two, in the direction of the gates. Being somewhat in the rear of the rest, we had our conversation quite to ourselves, and could chat without reserve.

"With all my heart," I replied, smiling. "Of your singing, for instance. I never knew that you were a musician before; and still less that you were a poet!"

"A poet!" he repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Simply that your unknown author, Mr. Farquhar, has no *incognito* for me. That Serenade is yours."

"In the name of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins! how could you tell that?"

"Nay, I am not wise enough to analyze my impressions! I only know that I recognised you in the verses—should have even known them to be yours, had any other person read or sung them to me."

He came to a sudden halt, and laid his hand heavily upon my shoulder.

"Barbara," he said, in a low vibrating tone, scarce louder than a whisper. "What can *you* recognise of the *Ego* in that song? What experience have *you* of any power of passion that may be in me? You neither know how I can love, nor how I can hate. I am a sealed book to you."

Was he a sealed book to me? I began to doubt it.

"You are silent," he said, and I felt that he was looking at me. "You are silent; and I dare not interpret that silence, lest I deceive myself. Is it possible that you know me too well? Is it possible that your eyes have read that page which I had vowed they should never read, though to blot it out were to erase the fairest passage from my life? Speak, child; for I must know!"

"I—I have read nothing—I know nothing," I stammered. "I never wish to know anything that you do not choose to tell me! Pray do not be angry with me, Mr. Farquhar!"

"Angry!" he echoed. "Angry, my darling!"

His voice, as he spoke these words, took an accent so sweet and tender that I looked up and smiled involuntarily, like a child forgiven.

He passed his arm about my waist, and drew me gently towards him.

"We have misunderstood each other, Barbara *mia*," he said, soothingly. "Nothing was farther from my mood, heaven knows! than to pain or terrify you. It was not anger, but ..... but, child, can you not understand that there might be something—something written down in that same book of my soul, which I would not place before you for a kingdom; and yet—if you guessed it... Am I talking enigmas?"

Saying this, he held me still more closely, and looked down into my eyes with such a burning light in his that I could not meet them.

"I—yes—you bewilder me," I faltered. "See —we are left quite behind! Let us go on."

"Yes, let us go on," he repeated; but, instead of going on, bent down, and pressed his lips upon my forehead.

For a moment I rested in his arms, willingly, wearily, and allowed my eyes to close, and my cheek to lean against the beatings of his heart. Only for a moment; and yet, in that moment, the sense of the mystery grew clear to me, and life became earnest!

Then he suffered me to disengage myself from his embrace, and we went on our way without another word.

The rest of that walk, the drive back to Paris, the ball that followed in the evening, all passed over me like a dream. I remember nothing of the incident, nothing of the conversations that took place. I only know that he was there; that he danced with me; that he looked at me; that he held my hand many times in his; and that once during the evening he praised my looks, and the fashion of my hair, and told me I was like some picture of Jephtha's daughter that he had seen abroad. And then, when it was all over, and the

guests were gone, and I had gained the solitude of my own room, I was happy—so happy, that I threw open my window and leaned out into the cool night, and wept for joy!

And then I thought of Hilda, and my heart bled for her. I had pitied her in the morning; but I now pitied her far more. A whole world of feeling had been revealed to me since then. I had passed in a few hours from childhood to womanhood; and now, measuring her loss by my sweet gain, shuddered at the life to which she had condemned herself.

And all this time I never paused to reason on my own feelings, or my possible future. I never once asked myself "what next?" or wondered at aught that had hitherto been ambiguous and strange in the tenor of our intercourse. It was enough happiness to love and be loved—and enough knowledge, also!

CHAPTER X.

THE NEXT MORNING.

MR. FARQUHAR called the next morning, about noon. My father had gone to see Sir Agamemnon off by the midday train, and Mrs. Churchill was reclining on a sofa, absorbed in a novel by George Sand. When our visitor came in, she laid her book aside, welcomed him graciously, and assigned him a seat beside her sofa. To me he gave only a glance, and a pressure of the hand.

First they talked of the wedding, the ball, the *belles toilettes*, and such other matters. Then the conversation fell upon Norway, and they traced out Hilda's route upon the map, and calculated the probable whereabouts of the bridal pair at that present moment. In all this I took no part, but sat by silently, content to listen to his voice. I had

been sketching a little subject in Mrs. Churchill's album, and I endeavoured still to seem occupied upon it; but my hand grew unsteady, and my attention wandered. By and by Mrs. Churchill left the room on some trivial pretext, smiling as she passed me; and I suddenly remembered that she had done the same thing once or twice before. The blood rushed to my face, and, half in shame and half in anger, I rose to follow her.

He was at my side in an instant.

"Whither away, my child?" he said. "Are you afraid of me to-day?"

I murmured something unintelligible—I scarcely know what—but passively resumed my seat. He stooped over the back of the chair, and looked at my half-finished sketch.

"What have we here?" he exclaimed. "A fountain and a group of beggars—one stalwart figure high above the rest—a mandolin in his hand—a pair of buckets at his feet . . . *Per Bacco!* 'tis my Andalusian water-carrier of the Puerta del Sol! Whose album is this?"

"Mrs. Churchill's."

"Then Mrs. Churchill must resign the water-carrier in my favour. Nonsense, child! I have half a right to him already. He is the creature of my experience."

"But he is also the creature of my imagination,"

I remonstrated, seeing him take his penknife from his pocket; "and, as such, I have already given him away."

"A reason the more why I should have him! I mean to take possession of your imagination, your heart, your past, your future, and all that is yours! So! when Madame *la belle mère* comes to examine her album, she will wonder what conjuror has been at work upon it."

And with this he very deliberately and dexterously cut the page away, and put the drawing in his pocket-book.

"Indeed, Mr. Farquhar," I said reproachfully, "this is not fair. What shall I say to Mrs. Churchill?"

"Nothing whatever. I engage to make it right with her myself. You look tired, Barbara *mia!*"

"I am tired," I replied. "I have been out with Mrs. Churchill all the morning."

"And slept too little last night!"

"Nay, it was not a very late party. They were all gone by one o'clock."

"True; but you were not in bed till after three."

"How should you know?" I exclaimed, startled into involuntary confession.

"Ah, that is my secret. Guess it if you can."

"How should I guess it, unless you possess a magic mirror, or Doctor Dee's crystal, or travel

over Paris at night, like the Devil on two Sticks!"

"Neither of the three, *carina*. What will you give me, if I tell you?"

I smiled, and shook my head. I was painfully nervous; and, strive as I would, could not control the changing of my colour, or the trembling of my hand.

"Will you give me this curl of brown hair?"

"No; for it is the most unlucky of gifts."

"My child, you are superstitious. However, I am not difficult. Give me this little golden cross from round your neck, and I will promise to kneel to it every night before I sleep, and every morning when I rise, like the best of Catholics!"

"No, for the cross was Ida's, and I have promised to keep it for her sake. Besides, you should kneel to better purpose."

"Aye—to yourself. Well, give me yourself, and I will lie for ever at your feet!"

"Tell me without asking to be paid at all," I stammered. "It would be far more generous."

"But I am not generous! I am jealous, exorbitant, insatiable—a very Shylock at a bargain! Well, well, Barbarina, since you are so hopelessly mean, give me what you will; or give me nothing. I will tell you all the same!"

"I have already given you the sketch, Mr. Farquhar."

"Given me the sketch! Hear that, oh Gods of Olympus! Why, you have no conscience, Barbara, if you call that a gift! I stole it—'tis 'the captive of my bow and spear,' and I owe you no thanks in the matter. Come, I will make you a present of my information, and leave you to reward me as you will. I know that you were not asleep till three o'clock this morning, because it was not till three o'clock that you extinguished your candle. Now, if you want to be told whence I obtained that knowledge, we will begin bargaining over again!"

"Indeed, we will do no such thing. I believe it is but a chance guess, after all!"

"A chance guess! Alas! shall I confess to a piece of arrant folly?"

"Nay, I am not your father confessor."

"No matter—supposing now . . . supposing that I, 'potent, grave, and reverend signor' as I am, had actually been romantic enough to linger last night, like Romeo, in the shade of yonder trees, watching that little taper light of yours for two mortal hours—what then?"

What then, indeed! I felt my lip quiver, and dared not trust my voice with words. The whole tone of this conversation, half jesting, half passion-

ate, was inexpressibly trying. I felt as if I would have given the world to escape.

All at once he rose, and stood before me.

"Little Barbara," he said, earnestly, "let us trifle no more. I am a conceited monster—granted. And I am as unworthy as I am conceited—granted again. But, when I saw that light burning in your window—when once I even fancied that I saw the very flutter of your drapery—I had the vanity, the stupid, ignorant vanity, to believe that you were wakeful for my sake—just as I was wakeful for yours. I was wrong. I know I was wrong—and yet I shall not be quite at rest until I have my answer from yourself. Give it to me in a single word, a single look, and let me go!"

I felt my colour rise and then ebb quite away; and still I spoke not. He bent over me, lower and lower.

"What! silent, Barbara? Have you no word of banishment for me?"

I shook my head.

"Why should I banish you?" I faltered. "Why should I banish you, when your presence makes my happiness?"

With a sort of wild sob, he fell down before me, and covered my hands with kisses.

"My darling! my darling!" he cried, "can you really love me?"

"I have loved you," I whispered, "ever since I was a little child. Do you remember our last meeting in the woods?"

"I remember it," he said, softly.

"I have cherished the ring ever since. It was too big for me then—it is too big for me still. Do you remember it?"

"Yes," he repeated, in the same low tone. "I remember it."

We were silent for some moments.

"How much has happened," I said, "since then! I never thought to see you again."

"And now you really love me? You are sure —sure you love me, Barbara?"

"Quite sure," I replied, laying my hand timidly upon his brow. "Quite sure, Hugh—and quite happy."

He shuddered, and buried his face in my lap.

"Happy!" he echoed. "Happy!—oh, my God!"

"What do you mean?" I faltered. "Are *you* not happy?"

"I—I happy?" he cried, hoarsely. "I am utterly miserable—I hate myself! Oh, Barbara, tell me that you love me no longer, and let me go!"

"That is the second time that you have bade me send you from me!" I said, becoming greatly agitated. "The second time within a few moments! What do you mean? You are free to go—you were free never to have come! Why cannot my affection make you happy? If it be fault of mine, I will amend it; but do not torture me with vague fears, or tell me that you are miserable. If you love me, why desire to leave me? If you do not love me, why come here to humble my pride, and wrest from me an avowal . . . ."

"I do love you!" he sobbed. "I love you better than earth or heaven!"

His anguish disarmed me.

"Oh, Hugh," I said, "your love is the blessing of my life!"

He sprang to his feet, and turned upon me a face so haggard and disfigured that it seemed scarcely the same.

"But it is the curse—the curse of mine!" he exclaimed bitterly, and, with wavering steps, turned towards the door. About half-way he paused, ran back, caught me in a wild embrace, and was gone in an instant.

Terrified, half-fainting, sick at heart, I followed him to the landing, and heard the echo of the closing door—then sat down on the stairs and wondered

why I could not weep, or whether I were dreaming?

"I shall never see him again," I said to myself. "I shall never, never see him again!"

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE BREAKFAST.

THREE days went by, and I neither saw nor heard anything of him. I believed that he was gone for ever, and so gave myself quite up to a passive despair which I cannot now recall without a shudder. I seemed to live "'twixt asleep and wake," and, on the plea of some minor indisposition, kept chiefly in the solitude of my chamber. There I lay for hours at a time, with closed eyes and clasped hands, scarcely moving, scarcely breathing, scarcely conscious of living, save for the dull weight upon my heart, and the perpetual throbbing at my temples. All my thought was but of the one theme—*he was gone!*

I never once asked myself whither he was gone.

I never once hoped that he would come back. I simply said—"it is over."

On the evening of the third day, I made up my mind that I would return to Zollenstrasse. This resolution did me good, and gave me temporary strength. I thought of Ida; and I endeavoured to persuade myself that while art and friendship remained to me, all was not wholly dark in life. I did not really believe in my own reasoning, and I was not really comforted by it. Like all who mourn, I had a conviction that the present shadow must lie upon my soul for ever; but still the mere contemplation of action brought with it something like the relief of change. That night I slept for several hours, and on the morning of the fourth day rose, still weak and pale, but resolved to carry out my design, and to acquaint my father of it without delay.

"If I can but start this evening!" I kept repeating to myself. "If they will but let me go without torturing me with questions!" The questioning was all I dreaded.

Having awoke early, and dressed with all the haste of this project on my mind, I found that it yet wanted an hour and a half to our usual breakfast time, and that none but the servants were stirring. An unconquerable restlessness had taken possession of me, and, in my present mood, inaction

was no longer possible. What was I to do for an hour and a half? The morning was cool and bright, and the trees rustled pleasantly in the breeze. I fancied the air would brace my nerves for all that was to come; so I put on a thick veil, wrapped a shawl hastily about me, and went out.

I walked fast, and the quick motion did me good. I think I went as far as the gates of the Bois; but I remember nothing distinctly, save that a detachment of troops came marching past, with a band playing merrily before them, and that the music to my sick ears sounded sadder than a requiem. As I came back to the Round Point and turned down the avenue in which we lived, the clocks were striking nine.

While I was yet listening to their echoes, and hesitating whether to go home or turn back again, a man rose from a stone bench close at hand, and called me by my name.

"Barbara!" he said. "I am here, Barbara!"

Oh, the dear voice that I had thought never to hear again! It seemed for a moment to stop the pulsations of my heart, and then sent it beating so fast that I could scarcely breathe.

"Hugh!" I faltered. "I thought you were gone!"

"And so I was; but at Liege my strength failed me. I could not leave you, Barbara."

"Let me sit down," I said, clinging to him. "I am giddy."

He passed his arm about my waist, and carried me to a bench farther in among the trees.

"My own darling!" he exclaimed brokenly. "Look up—look up—smile upon me—tell me that I am welcome! Oh, I have suffered, Barbara! I have gone through an eternity since we parted!"

"And is it really you?"

"It is really I. I, thy friend, thy lover, thy husband!"

"And you will never leave me again?"

"Not till you bid me go!"

I smiled at this, and laid my head upon his shoulder like a tired child.

"Yesterday," he went on, "all Belgium lay between us. I was mad—utterly mad, and broken-hearted. I should have been glad to die—I felt I must die if I went farther!"

"And so you turned back again?"

"Turned back—travelled all the afternoon, all the night, and reached this place five hours ago. It was just dawn, and I have been walking up and down these roads ever since, waiting till it was late enough to claim admittance."

"One day more, and you would not have found

me. I had made up my mind to return to Zollenstrasse to-night."

"What of that? I should have followed you."

"So far?"

"Cruel! Have I not fled from you, come back to you, travelled without rest or pause since I last saw you; and do you doubt that I would follow you, though Zollenstrasse lay at the ends of the earth?"

"Ah, but why did you fly from me at all?"

He looked down, and hesitated.

"My darling," he said, pressing his hand nervously to his brow, "I am a strange fellow, and have led a strange life. I—I cannot look at things as others do—I am but half civilised, you know, and . . and reason upon ordinary events more like a red Indian than a man of the world. You cannot understand what I have felt of late—I cannot even explain to you what I mean! I have fantastic scruples—self-torturing doubts—all sorts of hesitations—weaknesses, if you choose so to call them. You must not question me too closely—you must make allowances and excuses for me, and be content with knowing how I love you. It would puzzle me, indeed, to reply distinctly to all that you might ask. My motives are not always

clear to myself, and I act more frequently from impulse than reflection."

"Then impulse took you from me," I said reproachfully, "and reflection brought you back!"

"By heavens! the reverse. I left you because —because I felt unworthy of your fresh, pure love. I came back, because I could not live without it!"

"And yet . . ."

"And yet you are not satisfied! Oh, Barbara, bear with me, bear with me; for I love you! I love you with a love beyond love; with all my strength and all my weakness—with every breath that I draw, and with every pulse of my heart! To dedicate my life to your happiness; to be the author of your future; to build up all your joys; shield you from all sorrow; and turn aside every shaft of evil fortune as it flies—these, these are now the only privileges for which I pray to heaven!"

Feeling how thoroughly every word came from his heart of hearts, what could I do but listen and believe?

"I never thought," continued he, "to love again. I never hoped to win a nature so sweet, so fresh, so innocent as yours. My experience, dear, has been fierce and stormy; and my very soul is scarred with self-inflicted wounds. Would you know the

secret of my restless life? Read it in my bitterness of heart, my weariness of soul, my inward rage of disappointment, my unsatisfied longings! Begun in the first buoyancy of youth, these wanderings became at last my sole resource. Change of scene, intercourse with strangers, accident, danger, activity—these things alone rescued me from utter lassitude of spirit, and preserved me from becoming a mere misanthrope. He who dwells always in the world can never wholly hate it; and I, thank God! have lived too much among my fellow men to judge them harshly. Still, Barbara, I have suffered—suffered disappointment, and solitude, and that feverish recklessness of past and future that has already hurried many a better man to perdition. But it is over—over for ever, my sweet child! You love me, and I am at rest! You love me, my love, and that knowledge is the undeserved blessing of my life!"

I had listened, till now, in a dreamy content, paying less heed to the sense of what he said than to the low, passionate music of his voice; but at these last words I started. *My* love "the undeserved blessing of his life!" Alas! four days ago—only four days ago—in accents that I never could forget, had he not cried against it as "a curse?" A curse! The recollection was horrible, and flashed across me like an evil prophecy.

"Oh, Hugh," I faltered, "are you sure that I can make you happier?"

"As sure," said he, "as of my own existence."

"But I am so young and ignorant .... what power of blessing can there be in me?"

"As much as in any saint that ever visited the visions of an anchorite! Power to bless, to heal, to save! Power, dear heart, to bring me back to the earnestness of life, and teach me all the meanings of that sweet word 'home,' which as yet I have never, never learned!"

"Home!" I repeated, musingly. "Home! Home means Broomhill .... oh, Hugh, how strange that seems!"

His hand closed sharply and suddenly on mine.

"Home, my dear love," he said, hurriedly, "means any corner of God's earth where you and I may care to pitch our tent together. We carry our home in our own true hearts, and neither country, nor climate, have aught to do with it!"

"But .... but will you still care to be always wandering?" I asked, somewhat dismayed.

"Heaven forbid! Nay, darling, why that troubled face? My wanderings are done, my anchor cast, my haven found! Your presence is now become my only need; and where you are, there is home for me! Do you not believe that, loving you thus, I could be as happy with you in Siberia

as in England—in a prison as at Broomhill? Now, for my part, I should ask nothing better than to live with you for ever in a secluded *châlet* on the borders of some blue Swiss lake, isolated and unknown! Or, better still, in some old Italian villa looking to the sea, with gardens half in ruin, halls once painted by the hand of Mantegna or Bordone, and a name recalling all the faded glories of a race long passed away! What say you, Barbara *mia?*"

"That I could be happy anywhere with you, needing neither châlets, nor villas, nor any kind of probation to prove it, Hugh; but that, above all imaginary homes, I prize and prefer your own dear, substantial, actual English house at Broomhill!"

He turned his head away, still playing caressingly with my hand.

"Do you so love and remember it?" he asked in a low constrained tone.

"I remember it, as if it were but yesterday when last I saw it; and I love it better than any spot in all the world!"

He was silent, and, in the midst of his silence, the clocks again began striking.

"Ten o'clock!" I exclaimed. "Ten o'clock, and we always breakfast punctually at half-past nine! What will papa say?"

"That he has no objection, I hope, to receive me for a son-in-law! Come, shall we go in and tell him that he has this morning lost another daughter?"

And so we rose from our bench among the trees, and went back along the Allée des Veuves. At our own gate we paused, and Hugh put out his hand to ring the bell. I laid mine on his wrist, and stopped him.

"But tell me," I said, half-laughing, half-crying —"shall I really not go back to Zollenstrasse-am-Main?"

"No more, dearest, than I shall go to St. Petersburgh!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SILVER RING IS TURNED TO GOLD.

THREE weeks went by—only three weeks of betrothal between that morning and our marriage day! An interval too brief, considering how mere a child I was; but, even so, too long for his impatience. Bewildered by a thousand womanly cares and preparations, and hurried on by his feverish entreaties, I saw the time glide past, almost without comprehending how utterly my future was transformed, or how grave a care I had taken into my life. I was about to become Hugh Farquhar's wife—that was the one thought filling all my being, starting up before me at every turn, and informing my very dreams with a strange joy, half wonder and half prayer. His wife! There were

times when I could not believe it—when not even that little ruby ring, "heart shaped and vermeil-dyed," with which he had commemorated our first vows, seemed proof enough—when only the pressure of his warm, strong hand, and the repeated assurance that he loved me, and only me in all the world, could bring conviction of the truth. His wife! How should I deserve, and how do honour to that name? What was I, that he should have chosen me to be the friend and companion of his life? I loved him, it is true; and I had loved him from my childhood upwards. Before I had ever seen him, he was the hero of every fairy-tale and every wild adventure that I read—the prince in disguise, the avenger, the conqueror, the chevalier "*sans peur et sans reproche.*" At Broomhill, from that night when first we met, he became the idol of my dreams; and, engrafting upon my knowledge of the man as I then saw him all that had before been visionary and romantic in my conception of him, I loved him as only a child can love—purely, passionately, humbly, like a dog, or a devotee. Remembering how I lay at his door when he was ill; how I prayed for him; how I watched his every look; anticipated his merest wish; and was repaid a thousand-fold by only a smile or a word, I could but acknowledge that I deserved, after all these years, to win his love in return. Yes—I had

loved him all my life, and he had chosen me to be his wife at last!

Still I was very young—very ignorant of the world and its duties—very doubtful how to make him happy, and how to be worthy of his choice. Fain would I, for these reasons, have prolonged our engagement for a year; but my father objected to the delay, and Hugh himself could scarcely have pleaded more eagerly had I desired to break it off altogether. Even when I had given up this point, and the day was close at hand, he tormented himself and me with a thousand apprehensions.

"I feel," he said, "as if something *must* happen to rob me of my happiness—as if an invisible hand were outstretched, even now, to snatch you from me! I never leave you without a vague dread lest it should be the last time that I behold you; and I never return to the house without asking myself what I should do if you were gone, no one knew whither! At night I start from sleep, calling upon your name, and fancying we are parted for ever. I know that these are absurd terrors; but is it my fault if I suffer from them? Till you are wholly and irrevocably mine, it must be thus. Without you I am nothing—not even myself. Tortured by a thousand fears and follies, I count every day and every hour that lies

between me and the fulfilment of my hopes. Do you wonder at it? I have never yet been happy, and happiness is just within my grasp. I have thirsted; and an angel holds the cup to my lips. I have wandered all my life in the desert; and Paradise is opening before me! If I am a coward, it is because I love you, and because to lose you were to lose all that makes existence precious!"

Saying thus, he would clasp me wildly to his heart; or seize my hands and cover them with kisses.

Sometimes he was absent, silent, oppressed, as it were, with an overwhelming melancholy. Sometimes he almost terrified me by his frantic and unbounded gaiety. More than once, when we were sitting quietly alone, talking as lovers talk by twilight, he started from my side like one possessed, and paced the room in uncontrollable agitation. If I questioned him upon these wayward moods he laughed the subject off, or went back to the old theme of his presentiments and his impatience.

During these three weeks my father was kinder to me than he had ever been before. Knowing what my views had been with regard to art, I think he was agreeably surprised by the turn affairs had taken—at all events, he took occasion to show me that I had risen in his good opinion, and that he looked upon my present conduct as the

result of his own paternal cares and counsels. He considered that to marry advantageously was the duty of every well-bred young woman, and that to achieve this duty as early as possible, evinced on her part only the more gratitude and discretion. I had fulfilled both these conditions, and he was pleased to regard me with proportionate favour. In all matters connected with my trousseau he was liberal to a degree that surprised me; for I knew that Mrs. Churchill's fortune was settled on herself, and that our means had never been large; but he explained this by telling me that he had some years ago sunk his capital for an annuity, reserving only a few hundreds in case of sudden need. These hundreds he had now divided between Hilda and myself; judging it better for ourselves, and more creditable to his own name and position to equip his daughters richly, than to bequeath them, at his death, a sum too small to be regarded in the light of a dowry. His own pride, in short, coloured all my father's opinions, and governed every action of his life.

From the manner in which he received Mr. Farquhar's proposals, and the readiness with which he consented to our speedy union, I could not help thinking that he had, from the first, foreseen how this intimacy might end, and was glad to get me married as soon as might be. Certain it was that

both he and Mrs. Churchill had afforded every facility to our attachment; and I now remembered a thousand trifles that had escaped me at the time, if not without observation, at all events without suspicion. Now they recurred to me distinctly enough, and despite my present happiness, irritated and humiliated me almost beyond endurance.

Thus the three weeks ebbed away, and it came to the eve of our wedding.

We had had news that day from Hilda. Her letter was dated from Drontheim, and full of the scenery of the Dovrefjeld, over which they had just passed. In a brief message she desired her love and her congratulations to her "sister Barbara;" but it read coldly and grudgingly, as if she could scarcely forgive me for my happiness. This impression, added to the cares and excitements of this busy time, made me sad and weary; and I was thankful when Hugh came at length to tempt me out for a last stroll among the dusky avenues of the Champs Elysées.

It was twilight, and the evening air tasted already of autumnal frosts. We were glad to walk fast and get warm, exchanging just a word from time to time, and finding as much companionship in silence as in speech. How gay it was here among the crowded pathways! How the lamps

glittered, and the music echoed in the illuminated gardens of the Cafés Chantants! Here were carriages, "thick as leaves in Vallombrosa." Yonder, with a helmet on his head, and a trumpeter at his side, stood a quack doctor, gesticulating like a marionnette. A little farther on was gathered a ring of applauding spectators, with the dancing dogs performing in the midst. It was Paris epitomised —pleasure-seeking, feverish Paris, with all its wealth, its poverty, and its unrest!

Strolling idly hither and thither; hazarding guesses as to where we two might be this day week, or this day month; talking now of Rome, now of Venice, and now of the great Alps which I was soon to see for the first time, we came all at once upon a space to the left of the Cirque, where an itinerant ballad-singer stood, surrounded by his little audience. Something in the voice, something in the melody struck me, and we paused to listen.

"Surely," said Hugh, "it is our guitarist of Vincennes!"

And so it was. We did not care to go nearer; but, lingering beyond the circle, could just catch the plaintive burthen of his song:—

"*File, file, pauvre Marie,*
File, file pour le prisonnier!"

When this was ended, he sang another as sad. Then there was a stir among the listeners, and some dispersed, and we saw a woman collecting such stray contributions as three or four of the more liberal were pleased to offer.

"Poor Orpheus!" ejaculated my companion, taking out his purse. "I had not supposed that there was a Eurydice in the case!"

Scarcely had the words escaped his lips, when she came a step or two nearer; but hesitatingly, as if too proud to solicit. Hugh slipped a five-franc piece into my hand.

"Be my almoner," he whispered, and drew back to let me give it.

She took it, unconscious of its value; then paused, examined it wonderingly, and looked up in my face. At that moment I felt my arm crushed in Hugh's grasp, as in a vice!

"Come away! come away!" he said, dragging me suddenly, almost savagely, into the road. "My God, child! why do you hold back?"

Too frightened to reply, I suffered myself to be hurried between the very wheels of the carriages, and lifted into the first empty fly that came past.

"*Où allez vous, Monsieur!*" asked the driver.

Hugh flung himself back, with a kind of groan.

"Anywhere—anywhere!" he exclaimed. "Out beyond the barriers—round by the Invalides. Anywhere!"

The man touched his hat, and took the road to Neuilly. For a long time we were both silent; but at length, weary of waiting, I stole my hand into his, and nestled closer to his side.

"Oh, Hugh," I said, "what ails you? What has happened?"

He shook his head gloomily.

"Was it my fault, Hugh?"

"Your fault, my darling? What folly!"

And, taking my head in his two hands, he kissed me tenderly, almost compassionately, like an indulgent father.

"Nay, then, what ailed you just now?"

He shuddered, hesitated, sighed heavily.

"I—I scarcely know," he said. "It was the sight of that . . . that woman's face, when the light fell on it—a resemblance, Barbara—a resemblance so strange and ghostlike, that . . . Pshaw, child, can you not understand that, when a man has travelled about the world for twelve or fourteen years, he may sometimes come across a face that startles him—reminds him, perhaps, of some other face, thousands of miles away? It has happened to me before—fifty times before."

"And was that all?"

"All. All, and enough."

"But you frightened me—and my arm will be black and blue to-morrow."

"Oh, Heavens! Have I hurt you?"

Laughing, I rolled up my sleeve, and, by the light of the lamps, showed him the red marks on my arm. He overwhelmed himself with reproaches and me with pity, till, satisfied with the excess of his penitence, I silenced and forgave him.

"But," I began, "you have not yet told me whose face . . . ."

He interrupted me by a gesture.

"My dear love," he said earnestly, "spare me that question. By and by, when you have known me longer and better, I will tell you from end to end, the story of my life—all its follies, all its weaknesses, all its errors. But this is not the time or place, Barbara. Wait—wait and trust; and till then, ask no more. Will you promise this?"

I promised it, readily enough; and there it ended.

The next morning we were married. Married very early, and very quietly, in the little Marbœuf Chapel of the Rue du Chaillot. We had neither bridesmaids, nor carriages, nor wedding-guests. We walked down to the chapel before breakfast, my

father, Mrs. Churchill, and I, and found Hugh waiting for us, and the clergyman chatting with him over the rails of the chancel. I can see the place now; the morning sun shining slantwise through the upper windows; the turned cushions in the pews; and the old sextoness, in her mob-cap and sabots, dusting the hassocks on which we were to kneel. I even remember how, in the midst of the service, my eyes became attracted to a tablet beside the altar, recording the early death of a certain Eleanor Rothsay, "one year and three days after her marriage;" and how, with a strange pang, I wondered if she were content to die; if her husband soon forgot her; and whether he loved another when she was gone?

When the ceremony was over, and the great books had been signed in the vestry, we went home again on foot, and breakfasted together, as usual. As for me, my thoughts still ran on that poor Eleanor and her brief year of happiness. It haunted me, like a sad tune, and set itself to every sight and sound of the "garish day;" nor did I quite forget it till, having bade them all good-bye, I found myself alone with my husband, speeding, speeding away, with Paris already far behind, and the eager train bearing us on towards Italy—the "azure Italy" of my old desires.

"My wife!" murmured Hugh, as he folded me

closer and closer to his heart. "Mine—my own—my beloved! never, never more, by day or night, to be parted from me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR HALCYON DAYS.

"Ye glittering towns with wealth and splendour crown'd;
Ye fields where summer spreads profusion round;
Ye lakes whose vessels catch the busy gale."—GOLDSMITH.

WE are travelling—have been travelling for many days—and find a second summer among the heights of the Bernese Oberland. The sky hangs over us, like a dome of blue and burning steel; and for a week we have not seen a cloud. Every night we rest at some hamlet in a valley among mountains; and every morning are on the road again. How happy we are, wandering, like children, hand in hand, amid this wild and beautiful nature! Italy lies yonder, behind those farthest peaks; but we are in no haste to climb them while this rare au-

tumn lasts. Free to go, free to stay, free to loiter away our halcyon days where or how we will, we linger among the upper Alps, and cannot bear to leave them. Sometimes our path lies across brown, heathery slopes, blazing with sunlight; sometimes through gorges dark with firs and deep in shade, where the night-dews rest till noon. The other morning, we saw the sunrise from the Righi. Yesterday we rowed across the blue-green lake of Brientz, and slept within hearing of the waterfalls in the vale of Hasli. To-day we have the Wetterhorn before us, piercing the calm sky like an obelisk of frosted silver. By and by, crossing a plateau of bare rock, we stand where the glacier of Rosenlaui reaches a frozen arm towards us down a chasm in the mountains. Tossed in huge peaks, and precipices, and crests of cruel ice, it lies with the blue light permeating through its uppermost blocks, and the sun shimmering over all its surface, like a moving mantle of intolerable splendour. Silently we traverse a mere plank across a rushing cataract, and tread the solid ice. Great crevices and pinnacles are around us. We enter a cavern in the glacier—a cavern blue and glassy as the grotto at Capri—and open in places to the still bluer vault of heaven. Strange passages of ice branch from it right and left, leading no one knows whither; but our mountaineers whisper together

of one who ventured to explore them and returned no more.

"Supposing, now, that these ice-walls were to give way," says my husband, leaning composedly upon his Alpenstock, "our remains might be preserved here for centuries; like the Mammoths that have been found from time to time imbedded in the ice-fields of Siberia! Only conceive, Barbarina, how the *savants* of a thousand years to come would be delighted with us!"

Seeing how the sides of the cave drip in the sun, and to what frail points of junction they have melted here and there, I confess to having but little relish for such speculations.

"This place," continues he, "reminds me of Dante's lowest circle. Here are the '*gelate croste*;' but where is Lucifer, with his mouthful of sinners? By the way, had Dante ever seen a glacier? It is possible. He travelled to Germany and Paris, and studied theology at Oxford. He might have crossed the Alps, Barbarina—who can tell?"

Who, indeed? But we have now once more emerged upon the outer world, and stand looking up towards that mysterious and immeasurable ice-field reaching away from plateau to plateau, from peak to peak, from Alp to Alp, of which the mightiest glaciers are but fringes on the mantle of winter. Before this sight, we both are silent; and,

as we go down again into the valley, I remember those solemn lines, "written before sunrise at Chamounix":—

> "'Ye Icefalls! Ye that from the mountain's brow
> Adown enormous ravines slope amain—
> Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
> And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!'"

It is a glowing golden afternoon, and this "summer of All Saints" has not yet been troubled by a sign of change. We are staying now at Interlaken, whence all the summer visitors have long departed; and this morning have come up the Valley of Lauterbrunnen, and seen the rainbow on the Staubbach. Hence, a steep zig-zag in the cliff has brought us to a plateau of pasture-lands nine hundred feet above the valley. Far beneath, threaded by a line of shining torrent, and looking so white, and still, and small, that I fancy I might almost cover it with my hand, lies the tiny village with its wooden bridge and antique painted spire. High above and before us, with only the fir-forests of the Wengern Alp between, rise the summits of the Jungfrau and the Peak of Silver.

"How strange it is up here!" says Hugh, as we pause to rest, and look around. "What a delicious sensation of height and freedom! This plateau is a mere shelf midway up the mountain, and

yet we have streams, and meadow-lands, and all the verdure of the valleys. Faith, love, I had rather live in such a scene, with the Alps for my neighbours, than in any family mansion that disfigures the face of the earth!"

"Had you been born to the inheritance of a châlet and a couple of meadows, husband, you would tell a different tale!"

"Nay, wife, you should have milked the cows, and made the cheeses; and I would have carried them to market on my back, like that stalwart fellow who went by just now. It would have been a pretty piece of pastoral for us both!"

And so, laughing gaily together, we go forward in the sunshine, and at every step the scene becomes more lovely. We are in a district of farm-lands and pastures. Every now and then, we come upon a cluster of cottages built in red-brown wood, with great sheltering eaves, and carven balconies where long strings of Indian corn hang out to dry in the sun. Some of these cottages have proverbs and sentences of Scripture cut in German characters all across the front; and at the doors sit old women with their distaffs, and young girls who sing as we pass by. Now we turn aside to gather the wild gentians hidden in the grass, and fill our mountain flasks at a pool among the rocks; and now, on a mound overgrown with briars, we find an Al-

pine strawberry. Here, too, are purple whortleberries and star-leaved *immortelles*, and whole shrubberies of the Alp-rose, with its myrtle-like leaf. But the roses are faded, and will bloom no more till the snows have fallen and melted again!

Now the cliffs close round more nearly, and the plateau narrows to a space of rock-strewn heath, a mile or so in width. The spot is strangely desolate, and looks as though it might have been the battle-ground of the Titans. Huge blocks of slate-grey granite here lie piled and scattered—each fragment a rock. Some are brown with moss; some are half-buried in the turf; and some are clothed with shrubs, the growth of years. A few goats browsing here and there, with bells about their necks, and a few rude cow-sheds built in sheltered corners, "all in and out of the rocks," only serve to make the place more solitary.

"I remember this spot," says Hugh, eagerly. "I descended upon it from the mountains, years ago, when I walked through Switzerland on foot. It was more wild and savage then—and so was I. Ah, little wife, you cannot fancy how wild and savage I was!"

"Nay, it is not difficult. You are half a barbarian now!"

"Am I? Well, so much the better; for it shall be your occupation to tame me! But look

up yonder—do you see a tiny rift there, on the face of the crag; like a scar on a soldier's brow?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, from that rift fell a rock, which, shattering from ledge to ledge, covered these acres with ruin. It happened, fortunately, towards midday, on the anniversary of some country festival, when the farm-folks were all gone down into the valley. What must they have felt, poor souls, when they came up at snuset, and found their homes desolate!"

"Oh, Hugh! when did this happen?"

"Long, long ago—twenty years, or more. The grass has grown, and the shrubs have sprung up since then, making destruction beautiful. But it was not thus when I first saw it. Those green hillocks were then mere mounds of stones and rubbish, and all the ground was sown with rugged fragments. Hark! what sound is that?"

Startled, we hold our breathing, and listen. First come a few hoarse discordant notes, and then, as if in the air above our heads, a silvery entanglement of such rare cadences as we have never heard before. What can it be? We hear it die away, as if carried from us by the breeze, and, looking in each other's faces, are about to speak, when it breaks forth again, mingling, echoing, fading as before, upon the upper air!

"We are on enchanted ground," whispers Hugh; "and this is the music that Ferdinand followed in the Island of Prospero!"

"Say, rather, that there are Eolian harps hidden somewhere in the rocks," I more practically suggest. "Let us look for them!"

"Look for them yourself, prosaic mortal—I shall seek Ariel. What ho! my tricksy spirit!"

But lo! a sudden turn in the rocks brings us face to face with the mystery; and our fairy music, so wild and sweet, proves to be a wondrous echo, tossed from cliff to cliff. As for Ariel, he is only a tiny cow-boy blowing a horn seven feet in length for the entertainment of a solitary traveller, who rides by, like Doctor Syntax, with a mule and an umbrella.

Thun, Berne, the Gemmi, Leukerbad—we have seen all these, and left the Oberland behind us; and now our route lies through the valley of the Rhone. We came from Leukerbad to Leuk last evening by the gorge of the Dala; and this morning drive gaily out through the one desolate street of this crumbling old Vallaisan town, passing the church, and the antique castle with its four quaint turrets, and the covered bridge over the Rhone. Hence we journey for some distance among stony shrub-grown hillocks, and plantations of young

trees; and then we cross the river again into a district of vineyards, with our road reaching straight into the dim perspective, miles and miles away. How like a painting of Turner's it opens before us, this broad and beautiful valley! Rich sloping vines "combed out upon the hillsides" skirt the mountains on either hand; sometimes divided from the road by flats of emerald meadow, and sometimes trailing their ripe fruits within reach of the passing wayfarer. Behind us, the stupendous precipices of the Gemmi still tower into sight; and in advance, far as we can see, the valley is bounded right and left by the Vallaisan Alps, which mingle their snow-peaks with the gathering cumuli, and fade away to air. Midway along the shadowy vista rise two steep and solitary hills, each crowned, like a Roman victor, with its mural coronet of ruins. A glorious landscape, so stately with poplars, so garlanded with vines, so thoroughly Italian in its beauty, that it might well be on the other side of the Alps, for any difference that the eye can see!

Thus, as we go forward through the plain, passing villages, and towns, and vineyards where the merry vintage is at its height, the scene becomes more and more Italian. In Sierra, through which our postilions rattle at full speed, the houses are high and dilapidated, with arcades running along

the basement stories, and Italian signs and names above the doors. In Sion there are Capuchins at the corners of the streets; and sullen, handsome women, who throw up their windows, and lean out to look at us, in true Italian fashion. Even the farm-houses scattered all about the valley are stuccoed white, or built of stone; with *loggias* on the roof, and sometimes a trellised vine before the door. We are now, it would seem, in the very heart of the grape-district. Here are vineyards in the valley, vineyards on the hillsides, vineyards down to the road on either hand! From some the harvest has already been gathered—some are still heavy with white and purple fruit—and some are filled with gay groups of vintagers, sunburnt as the soil. By and by we come upon a long procession of carts, all laden with high wooden cans of grapes; then upon an open shed, where some five or six swarthy fellows, armed with short poles, are mashing the red fruit; then upon a couple of grave shovel-hatted Abbés, and a stalwart friar, who prints the dusty road with the firm impress of his sandalled foot at each impatient stride. Then come more farms, more villages, more

> "Wains oxen-drawn,
> Laden with grapes, and dropping rosy wine;"

and presently we pass a blind beggar sitting by a

roadside cross, who asks charity in the name of the Blessed Mary.

Thus the day wanes, and, towards afternoon, we reach a famous vineyard of the Muscat grape, where the *vignerons* load our carriage with armfuls of the perfumed fruit. Here the cottages are more than ever Italian, with tiled roofs, and jutting eaves, and ingots of Indian corn festooned about the upper casements. Here, also, the wild peaks of the Diablerets come into sight—grim sentinels of the legendary Inferno of the Vallaisan peasant.

And now, as the sun sinks westward, we hear the chiming of the chapel-bells far away, and see bands of vintagers trudging wearily home; and still the long road lies before us, bordered by tremulous poplars, dusty, direct, interminable as ever! Being by this time very weary, I nestle down, "like a tired child," in my husband's arms, and implore to be amused; so Hugh proceeds to ransack the dusty storehouse of his memory, bringing forth now an anecdote of one who was buried alive by a landslip among the Diablerets—now an incident of his own travels—now a weird Hungarian legend of a vampire-priest who slaked his fearful thirst upon the fairest of the province, and was stabbed at last upon the steps of his own altar. Thus the tender gloom of early twilight steals over the landscape.

Thus the first pale stars come forth overhead. Thus, loving and beloved, we journey on together towards that still distant point where yonder solitary tower keeps watch above the village of Martigny.

We are in Italy. The snows of St. Bernard, and the plains of Piedmont are passed. We have visited Turin, the most symmetrical and monotonous of cities; Alessandria, the dullest; and Genoa, where hail and sunshine succeeded each other with every hour of the day. Now it is fine again; but clear and cold, and we are travelling by easy stages along the delicious *Riviera.* All day long, we have the blue sea beside us. At night, we put up at some little town in a nook of sandy bay, and are lulled to sleep by the sobbing of the waves. Sometimes, if the morning be very bright and warm, we breakfast on the terrace in front of our *osteria,* and watch the fishing-boats standing out to sea, and the red-capped urchins on the beach. Sometimes, as we are in the mood for loitering, we do not care to go farther than twelve or fifteen miles in the day; and so I spend long hours climbing among the cliffs, or coasting hither and thither in a tiny felucca with fantastic sails.

"Truly," says Hugh, as we sit one afternoon upon a "sea-girt promontory," watching the gra-

dual crimson of the sunset, "Plutarch was a man of taste."

"Plutarch!" I repeat, roused from my dreamy reverie. "Why so?"

"Because he has somewhere observed, that 'on land, our pleasantest journeys are those beside the sea; and that at sea, no voyage is so delightful as a cruise along the coast.' And he is right. Contrast and combination—these are the first elements of the picturesque. Salvator Rosa knew well the relative value of land and sea, and, whatever his faults, made a wise use of both. I am often reminded of his pictures by the scenery about us!"

"Why, Hugh, I have heard you condemn Salvator Rosa by the hour together!"

"Yes, for his blue mountains and his unnatural skies; for everything, in short, save the choice of his subjects, and the tone that time has helped to give them. See those overhanging cliffs, and that natural arch of rock above the road; could *he* have painted that, think you? Or yonder village with its open *campanile*, and background of ilex groves sloping almost to the water's edge? But this reminds me, dear, that you have not made a single sketch since we left Paris!"

"I have been very idle, it is true."

"Extremely idle! Come, you shall do penance to-morrow morning, and make me a sketch from

this very spot; taking in that fragment of red cliff, that group of fan-palms, and that exquisite cove with the old broken boat drawn up upon the beach! The colouring of that rock, Barbarina, with the dark cacti growing out of every cliff, is a study in itself!"

"Yes; but you would do it as well, and, perhaps, more patiently than I. Do you never draw now, Hugh?"

"Seldom or never."

"And yet you are a true artist. I have not forgotten those great folios full of sketches at Broomhill! They were in sad disorder, too—Algiers and Brighton, the Thames and the Nile, Devonshire and the Andes, all thrown together in most admired disorder. I shall regulate them when we go home, Hugh—ah, how strange it will seem, after so many, many years!"

"Yes," replies my husband, gloomily, "you were a little girl then, and I . . . Heigho! *Tempora mutantur.*"

"And then I shall see my aunt once more, and . . . ."

"Your aunt, child!" says Hugh, turning his face away. "Pshaw! she has forgotten you."

"I know it. She has cast me out of her heart, for a sin not my own. That is very bitter; and yet I believe I love her as dearly as ever! I have

been tempted a thousand times to write to her; and then again I have checked the impulse, believing that—that she cares for me no longer."

"My poor little Barbara!"

"Hush! I am not poor now, dearest! I am rich—very rich, and very happy."

And, with this, I nestle closer to his side, and the dear, protecting arm is folded round me.

"Can you not guess, Hugh, why I have been so very, very idle?" I whisper, presently.

"Nay, little wife, am I a sorcerer?"

"Yes—no—sometimes I think you are!"

"Well, then, I am a sorcerer no longer. I have broken my wand, burned my book, dismissed my goblin messengers, and become a mere mortal, like yourself. *Eh bien*, why is it?"

"Because—because I am too happy to sketch. Too happy for even Art to make me happier!"

"My darling!"

"And—and Love is so new to me, Hugh, and life so fair; and I feel as if to be grateful and happy were occupation enough."

"And so it is, wife—so it is! The gods do not often come down from Olympus; but when they do, let us entertain them royally, and put all else aside to do them honour!"

"But—but sometimes, Hugh, when I consider

what a perfect love is ours, I tremble, and ask myself, 'shall I always be so happy?'"

"Ah, Barbara, that is a question that we all ask once, perhaps twice, in life. But who can answer it? Neither you nor I! The present is ours—let us be content with it."

"I could not be content with it, Hugh, unless I accepted it as a prophecy of the future."

"Nor I, dear wife—nor I; but I believe that, with God's help, it will be so. And yet I have learned to mistrust the morrow, to mock the past, and to value the present moment at no more than its worth! These are hard lessons, love, and I have not yet unlearned them!"

"Hush," I cry, shudderingly. "To doubt *our* morrow is to blaspheme our love!"

"Child, I do not doubt—I speculate; and this only because I am so happy. Because I would fain stay the glory of the passing hour, and, like one of old, bid the Sun and Moon stand still above our heads. But I cannot—I cannot!"

"Alas! no. We must grow grey, and old, and change as others change; but what of that? We shall love on to the last, and die, as we have lived, together."

"Dear love, we will! *Amo*, *Amas*, *Amamus*, *Amaverimus* . . . Ah, what a pleasant verb, and how readily we learn to conjugate it!"

By this time the sunset has faded quite away, and the vesper-bell chimes from the campanile on the height; so we rise and go homeward by the beach, and find our landlady sitting on the threshold of her house with her infant at her breast, like one of Raffaelle's Madonnas. Within, a little brazen hand-lamp, by which Virgil might have sat to write, half lights our dusky chamber. The window is open, and looks upon the sea; and beside it stands a table with our frugal supper. How sweet is the flavour of our omelette to-night, and how excellent this flask of Orvieto! Like children on a holiday, we find everything delicious, and turn all things "to favour and to prettiness." The glorious world itself seems made for our delight; and the phenomena of nature appear, to our happy egotism, like spectacles played off to give us pleasure. For us the moon rises yonder, and the silver ripples break upon the beach—for us the evening air makes music in the pines, and wafts past our casement the last lingering notes of the Ave Maria!

> "Ah, me! how sweet is love itself possess'd,
> When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!"

Time went on, and the New Year found us dwelling in the shadow of that marble tower that leans

for ever above the Holy Field of Pisa. We liked the strange, old, lonely city, and lingered there for some weeks, sketching the monuments in the Campo Santo, wandering by moonlight among the grass-grown streets and silent palaces, and watching the sluggish Arno winding from bridge to bridge, on its way towards the sea. At length, as February came, the calm, bright skies and distant hills tempted us forth again; so we resumed our pleasant travelling life; turning aside, as heretofore, when it pleased us, from the beaten track; pausing on the road to sketch a ruin, or a lake; sleeping sometimes in a town, and sometimes at a farm-house among olive-groves; and loitering away our happy time, as though, like Sir Philip Sydney's Arcadian shepherd-boy, we should "never grow old."

By and by, however, there comes a day long to be remembered. Last night we were upon the sea, having taken a felucca at Orbitello. This morning we are slowly traversing a brown and sterile region. Our road lies among shapeless hillocks, shaggy with bush and briar. Far away on one side gleams a line of soft, blue sea—on the other, lie mountains as blue, but more distant. Not a sound stirs the stagnant air. Not a tree, not a housetop breaks the wide monotony. The dust lies beneath our wheels like a carpet, and follows us like a cloud. The grass is yellow; the

weeds are parched; and where there have been wayside pools, the ground is cracked, and dry. Now we pass a crumbling fragment of something that may have been a tomb or a temple, centuries ago. Now we come upon a little wild-eyed peasant-boy, keeping goats among the ruins, like Giotto of old. Presently a buffalo lifts his black mane above the brow of a neighbouring hillock, and rushes away before we can do more than point to the spot on which we saw it. Thus the day attains its noon, and the sun hangs overhead like a brazen shield, brilliant, but cold. Thus, too, we reach the brow of a long and steep ascent, where our driver pulls up to rest his weary beasts. The sea has now faded almost out of sight—the mountains look larger and nearer, with streaks of snow upon their summits—the Campagna reaches on and on and shows no sign of limit or of verdure—while, in the midst of the clear air, half way, as it would seem, between us and the purple Sabine range, rises one solemn, solitary dome. Can it be the dome of St. Peters?

I have been anticipating this for hours, looking for it from the top of every hill, and rehearsing in my own mind all the effect that it must produce upon me; and yet, now that I have it actually before my eyes, it comes upon me like something strange, sudden, unreal!

"Yes, little wife," says Hugh, answering my

unspoken thought, "Rome lies, unseen, in the shadow of that dome—Rome, and the Seven Hills! That mountain to our left is the classical Soracte. Yonder, amid the misty hollows of those remotest Apennines, nestle Tivoli and Tusculum. All around us reaches the battle-ground of centuries, the wide and wild Campagna, every rood of which is a chapter in the history of the world!"

I hear, but cannot speak; for I am thinking of Raffaelle and Michael Angelo, and the treasures of the Vatican.

"How often," continues my husband, musingly, "have the barbaric foes of early Rome paused thus at first sight of the Eternal City—paused, perchance, upon this very spot, with clash of sword and spear, eager for spoil, and thirsting for vengeance! And how often—ah! how often, may not the victorious legions of the Republic and the Empire have here stayed the torrent of their homeward march, to greet with shouts of triumph those distant towers where the Senate awaited them with honours, and their wives and children watched for their return! Faith, Barbara, I never come to Rome without wishing that I had lived in the period of her glory!"

"Absurd! You would have been dead hundreds of years by this time."

"A man can live but once, *petite;* and 'tis hard

that he may not, at least, make choice of his century. Now, for my part, I would give up all that has happened since, only to have heard Mark Anthony's speech over the dead body of Cæsar, and to have dined with Cicero at his villa in Tusculum!"

"Whilst *I* prefer to read Shakespeare's version of the former, and to picnic at Tusculum with Farquhar of Broomhill!"

"That is because times are degenerate, Barbarina!" replies Hugh, laughingly, "Had you been educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, instead of at Zollenstrasse-am-Main, you would have had better taste, and more respect for the classics. '*Oh, Roma, Roma, non e più come era prima!*' Have I not seen a travelling circus in the Mausoleum of Augustus, a French garrison in the Mole of Hadrian, and a Roman audience at a puppet-show?"

We have now lost sight of St. Peters, and entered upon a narrrow, dusty road, with mouldering white walls on either side. 'Tis a dreary approach to a great city, and for more than three miles is never varied, unless by a wayside trough, a ruined shed, a solitary juniper tree, or a desolate *albergo* with grated windows, and a rough fresco of a couple of flasks and a bunch of grapes painted over the door. Then comes a steep descent, a

sharp bend to the right, and the great dome again rises suddenly at the end of the road, so near that it seems as if I might almost touch it with my hand! And now the gates of Rome are close before us; and a cart comes through, driven by a tawny Roman peasant who guides his oxen standing, like a charioteer of old. Now we pass the piazza and colonnade of St. Peters, and the Castle of St. Angelo, with St. Michael poised above in everlasting bronze—ah, how well I seem to know it! Then the bridge guarded by angels; and the Tiber, the classic Tiber that Clelia swam! Alas! can this be it—this brown and sluggish stream, low sunk between steep banks of mud and ooze? Aye, it is indeed the *flavus Tiberinus*, the golden river of the poets; and these narrow streets, these churches, palaces, and hovels are ROME!

CHAPTER XIV.

ROME.

"I am in Rome! the City that so long
Reigned absolute, the mistress of the world;
The mighty vision that the prophets saw,
And trembled."

ROGERS.

In Rome, the artist feels impelled to stay for ever and be at rest. For him, other cities lose their old attractions; modern art, progress, personal ambition, cease alike to be of importance in his eyes; effort and emulation pass from him like mere dreams; "he walks amid a world of art in ruins," and would fain loiter away the remainder of his days among the wrecks of this antique world. Nor does he even feel that a life thus spent were unworthy of the genius that is in him. Self-forget-

ting, reverential, absorbed, he stands in the presence of the "Transfiguration," like a mortal before the Gods. If ever he chances to look back upon his former aspirations, it is with a sense of inferiority that is neither humiliation, nor envy, nor despair; but only lassitude of spirit, and the willing homage of the soul. Thus he comes to live more in the past than the present, more in the ideal than the real. Thus, too, all that is not Rome gradually loosens its hold upon his heart and his imagination. He feels that certain statues and pictures are henceforth necessary to him, and that certain ruins have become almost a part of his being. He could scarcely live away from the Vatican, or the Campidoglio, or the sweet sad face of Beatrice Cenci in the Barberini palace; and not to be within reach of Caracalla's Baths, or the solemn corridors of the Colosseum, would be exile unbearable. In this mood, he suffers the years to go by unheeded, and voluntarily blots his own name from the book of the Future; for Art is to him a religion, and he, like a monastic devotee, is content to substitute worship for work.

But for the strong tie binding me to the present, and but for that love which had of late become more to me than art or fame, I should have yielded utterly to the influences of the place. As it was, the days and weeks seemed to glide past in one un-

ceasing round of delight and wonder. I was never weary of villas, palaces, and galleries; of Raffaelle's violinist, or the dying gladiator, or the Archangel of Guido in the little church of the Cappucini. I filled my sketch-book with outlines, and spent whole days in the Halls of the Vatican, copying the figures on a frieze, or the *bassi relievi* of an antique sarcophagus. In these studies Hugh was my critic, associate, and guide; and, although his practical knowledge fell short of mine, I learnt much from him. His taste was perfect: his judgment faultless. He was familiar with every school, and had all the best pictures in the world by heart. The golden glooms of Rembrandt, the "rich impasting" of Van Eyck, the grand touch of Michael Angelo, were alike "things known and inimitable" to his unerring eye. He detected a copy at first sight; assigned names and dates without the help of a catalogue; and recognised at a glance

> "Whate'er Lorraine light touch'd with soft'ning hue,
> Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learned Poussin drew!"

To the acquisition of his critical knowledge he had, in short, devoted as much study as might have fitted him for a profession; and, to use his own words, had spent as many years of life in learning to appreciate a picture as he need have spent in

learning to paint it. Thus I acquired from him much that had hitherto been wanting to my education, and made daily progress in the paths of art. Thus, like many another, I could have gone on for ever from gallery to gallery, from church to church, from palace to palace, dreaming my life away in one long reverie of admiration before

> "The grandeur that was Greece, and the glory that was Rome."

We lived on the Pincian Hill, close by the gardens of the French Academy. Far and wide beneath our windows lay the spires and housetops of the Eternal city, with the Doria pines standing out against the western horizon. At the back we had a *loggia* overlooking the garden-studios of the French school, with the plantations of the Borghese Villa and the snow-streaked Apennines beyond. Ah, what glorious sights and sounds we had from those upper windows on the Pincian hill! What pomp and pageantry of cloud! What mists of golden dawn! What flashes of crimson sunset upon distant peaks! How often "we heard the chimes at midnight," rung out from three hundred churches, and were awakened in the early morning by military music, and the tramp of French troops marching to parade! After breakfast, we used to go down into the city to see some public or private col-

tion; or, map in hand, trace the site of a temple or a forum. Sometimes we made pious pilgrimages to places famous in art or history, such as the house of Rienzi, the tomb of Raffaelle, or the graves of our poets in the Protestant Burial-ground. Sometimes, when the morning was wet or dull, we passed a few pleasant hours in the studios of the Via Margutta, where the artists "most do congregate;" or loitered our time away among the curiosity shops of the Via Condotti. Later in the day, our horses were brought round, and we rode or drove beyond the walls, towards Antemnæ or Veii; or along the meadows behind the Vatican; or out by the Fountain of Egeria, in sight of those ruined Aqueducts which thread the brown wastes of the Campagna, like a funeral procession turned to stone. Then, when evening came, we piled the logs upon the hearth and read aloud by turns; or finished the morning's sketches. Now and then, if it were moonlight, we went out again; and sometimes, though seldom, dropped in for an hour at the Opera, or the Theatre Metastasio.

Oh! pleasant morning of youth, when these things made the earnest business of our lives—when the choice of a bronze or a cameo occupied our thoughts for half a day, and the purchase of a mosaic was matter for our gravest consideration—when the reading of a poem made us sad; or the

sight of a painting quickened the beating of our hearts; or the finding of some worthless relic filled us with delight! We could not then conceive that we should ever know more serious cares than these, or take half the interest in living men and women that we took in the Scipios and Servilii of old. We loved Rome as if it were our native city, and thought there could be no place in the world half so enchanting; but that was because we were so happy in it, and so solitary. We lived only in the past, and for each other. We had no friends, and cared to make none. Excepting as we were ourselves concerned, the present possessed but little interest for us; and, dwelling amid the tombs and palaces of a vanished race, we seemed to live doubly isolated from our fellow-men.

Thus the winter months glided away, and the spring-time came, and Lent was kept and ended. Thus Rome made holiday at Easter; and the violets grew thicker than ever on the grave of Keats; and the primroses lay in clusters of pale gold about the cypress glades of Monte Mario. Thus, too, we extended our rambles for many a mile beyond the city walls, trampling the wild-flowers of the Campagna; tracking the antique boundaries of Latium and Etruria; mapping out the battle-fields of the Eneid; and visiting the sites of cities whose history has been for long centuries confounded with tra-

dition, and whose temples were dedicated to a religion of which the poetry and the ruins alone survive.

It was indeed a happy, happy time; and the days went by as if they had been set to music!

CHAPTER XV.

CARPE DIEM.

"Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd."

THOMAS HOOD.

I NOW hardly know in what way the idea first came to me; but, somehow or another, I began about this time to suspect that my husband had no wish to return to Broomhill. The discovery was not sudden. It dawned upon me slowly, vaguely, imperceptibly; and was less the result of my own penetration than of evidence accumulated from a thousand trifles.

He never named Broomhill, or any circumstance that might lead to the subject. If I spoke of it, he was silent. If I exacted a reply, he gave it as

briefly as possible, and turned the conversation. When sometimes we talked, as lovers will, of how this love should run through all our days, like a golden thread in the rough woof of life, he avoided all mention of that ancestral home which should have been the scene of our romance; but laid it ever under foreign skies. Sometimes he talked of buying land in Switzerland, and cultivating a model farm. Sometimes of purchasing a villa at Castellamare; or of building one upon the borders of Lake Como; or of buying some old deserted *palazzo* in the environs of Rome, and fitting it up in the Renaissance style. Then, again, he would have a project for the extension of our tour through Hungary, Bavaria, and the Danubian provinces; or propose to equip a vessel for a lengthened cruise in Mediterranean waters, touching at all the chief ports of the Turkish and Dalmatian coasts, threading the mazes of the Isles of Greece, and ending with the Nile or the Holy Land. At first I only used to smile at these restless fancies, and attribute them to his old wandering habits; but a time came, by and by, when I could smile no longer—when a strange uneasy doubt stole gradually upon me, and I began to wonder whether there might not be, in all this, some purpose of intentional delay; some design to keep longer and longer away, and, perhaps, never to return.

How this doubt deepened into certainty, and in what manner it affected me, are transitions of thought and feeling which I now find it difficult to trace. I only know that I was bitterly disappointed; perhaps not altogether without reason, and yet more so than the occasion warranted. In the first place, my expatriation had already lasted many years. I longed to be once more surrounded by cheery English faces, and to hear the pleasant English tongue spoken about me. In the next place, I felt hurt that my love was not enough to make my husband happy, even under our grey skies in "duller Britain." Nay, I was half jealous of these foreign climes that had grown so dear to him, and of these habits which had become necessities. Besides, Broomhill, of all places in the land, was now my lawful home. Broomhill, of which I had been dreaming all these years. Broomhill, where, as a little child, I had contracted the first and last love of my life! It was no wonder, surely, that I yearned to go home to it across the Channel—and yet I might have been content with the sweet present! Except Hugh, no one loved or cared for me; and I had better have accepted my happiness *per se*, without a care or desire beyond it. Ah, why did I not? Why, when I had most reason to be glad, did I suffer myself to be tormented by the phantasm of a trouble? What mattered it whether we

dwelt in England or Italy, Rome or Broomhill, so that we were only together? He was with me; he loved me; and where love is, heaven is, if we would but believe it! Eve made Adam's paradise, and Robinson Crusoe's isle was a desert only because he lived in it alone. But, alas! it is ever thus. We cavil at the blessing possessed, and grasp at the shadow to come. We feel first, and reason afterwards; only we seldom begin to reason till it is too late!

One day, as the spring was rapidly merging into summer, we took a carriage and drove out from Rome to Albano. It was quite early when we started. The grassy mounds of the Campo Vaccino were crowded with bullock-trucks as we went down the Sacred Road; and the brown walls of the Colosseum were touched with golden sunshine. The same shadows that had fallen daily for centuries in the same places, darkened the windings of the lower passages. The blue day shone through the uppermost arches, and the shrubs that grew upon them waved to and fro in the morning breeze. A monk was preaching in the midst of the arena; and a French military band was practising upon the open ground behind the building.

"Oh, for a living Cæsar to expel these Gauls!" muttered Hugh, aiming the end of his cigar at the spurred heels of a dandy little *sous-lieutenant* who

was sauntering "delicately," like King Agag, on the sunny side of the road.

Passing out by the San Giovanni gate, we entered upon those broad wastes that lie to the south-east of the city. Going forward thence, with the aqueducts to our left, and the old Appian way, lined with crumbling sepulchres, reaching for miles in one unswerving line to our far right, we soon left Rome behind. Faint patches of vegetation gleamed here and there, like streaks of light; and nameless ruins lay scattered broadcast over the bleak slopes of this "most desolate region." Sometimes we came upon a primitive bullock-wagon, or a peasant driving an ass laden with green boughs; but these signs of life were rare. Presently we passed the remains of a square temple, with Corinthian pilasters—then a drove of shaggy ponies—then a little truck with a tiny pent-house reared on one side of the seat, to keep the driver from the sun—then a flock of rusty sheep—a stagnant pool—a clump of stunted trees—a conical thatched hut—a round sepulchre, half-buried in the soil of ages—a fragment of broken arch; and so on, for miles and miles, across the barren plain. By and by, we saw a drove of buffaloes scouring along towards the aqueducts, followed by a mounted herdsman, buskined and brown, with his lance in his hand, his blue cloak floating behind him, and

his sombrero down upon his brow—the very picture of a Mexican hunter.

Now the Campagna was left behind, and Albano stood straight before us, on the summit of a steep and weary hill. Low lines of whitewashed wall bordered the road on either side, enclosing fields of *fascine*, orchards, olive-grounds, and gloomy plantations of cypresses and pines. Next came a range of sand-banks, with cavernous hollows and deep undershadows; next, an old cinque-cento gateway, crumbling away by the road side; then a little wooden cross on an overhanging crag; then the sepulchre of Pompey; and then the gates of Albano, through which we rattled into the town, and up to the entrance of the Hotel de Russie. Here we tasted the wine that Horace praised, and lunched in a room that overlooked a brown sea of Campagna, with the hazy Mediterranean on the farthest horizon, and the tower of Corioli standing against the clear sky to our left.

By and by, we went out through the market-place, and up a steep road leading to the lake. Ah, how well I remember it! How well I remember that table-land of rock on which we stood, with Monte Cavo rising high before us, and the blue lake lying at our feet in a steep basin clothed with forests! Scrambling down upon a kind of natural terrace several feet below, we pushed our way

through the briars, and found a grassy knoll at the foot of an ilex, just on the margin of the precipice. Here we sat sheltered from the sun, with the placid lake below, the mountains above, and the pines of Castel Gondolfo standing like sentinels between us and the landscape. The air was heavy with fragrance, and a golden haze hung over Rome. We had brought sketch-books, but they lay untouched beside us on the grass. The scene was too fair for portraiture; and all that we could do was to drink deeply of its poetry, and talk from time to time of our great happiness.

"'Twas by the merest chance that you and I ever met again, love," said Hugh, taking up the broken threads of our conversation. "A feather might have turned the scale, and carried me direct to St. Petersburg; and then, good heavens! what a miserable wretch I should have been to this day!"

"A good angel brought me to you, Hugh," I murmured, leaning my head against his shoulder. "I cannot bear to think that we might never have met. I cannot believe but that we must some day have come face to face, and been happy!"

"Alas! we should have been strangers, Barbara *mia*. We might have looked in each other's eyes, and passed on for evermore!"

"Nay, that at all events would have been im-

possible! I should have known *you* anywhere."

"Perhaps so, little wife; but time, remember, has changed me less than you. You have journeyed all the way from Lilliput to Brobdingnag; whilst I have only grown rougher, browner, and uglier than ever. But you look grave, *mignonne*. What have I said to vex you?"

"Nothing, dearest—and yet .... and yet I am grieved to think that you could have passed me without one gleam of recognition. Surely some old thought must have come knocking at your heart—some vague picture of the little girl who loved you so dearly, long and long ago!"

My husband smiled, and laid his hand upon my head, as he used to lay it in that far-off time.

"*Enfant!*" he said, tenderly, "what matters it to thee or me, since we have met, and are happy? Think what it would have been had our meeting happened many a year to come, and happened too late!"

"Or if all things had come to pass just as they did, and yet you had not cared for me! Oh, Hugh, that would have been the cruelest of all!"

"And the least likely. Why, Barbara, you came to me at the time when I most needed you. You revived my trust in heaven, and my faith in man. You reconciled me to the present and the future; blotted out the past, and turned to wine

the bitter waters of my life! How, then, could I choose but love you? Aye, with every pulse of my heart, and every nerve of my brain—with my hopes, and my dreams, and all that is worthiest in me! Hush, you are weeping!"

"For joy," I whispered, brokenly; "for joy only. Speak to me thus for ever, and I will listen to you!"

He pressed his lips upon my forehead, and for some minutes we were both silent.

"Tell me," I said at length, "how and when you first began to love me. Did it come to you suddenly, or steal imperceptibly upon your heart, like the shadow over the dial?"

"Neither, and yet both," replied he, musingly. "I never knew the moment when it first befel me; and yet, like one of those mysterious isles that are upheaved in a single night from the depths of the great ocean, it rose all at once upon my life, and became my Paradise. Now it is ours, and ours alone. None but ourselves shall enter into that Eden—none but ourselves gather its flowers, or feed upon its fruits! Pshaw! what children we both are! With what delicious egotism we treasure up each 'trivial, fond record,' and tell the old tale o'er and o'er again!"

"Say rather the tale that is never old," I suggested; "the poem that is never ended; the song

that cannot be sung through! Ah, Hugh, I almost fear, sometimes, that to be so happy is not good for me."

"Not good, my Barbara—why so?"

"Because I seem to live for love alone, and to have forgotten all that once made the pleasure and purpose of my life. I have neither strength nor ambition left; and my 'so potent art!' has lost its magic for me. I fear that I shall never make a painter."

He smiled and sighed, and a look half of regret, half of compassion, passed across his face.

"Art is long, and life is short," he said. "We can never compass the one; but we may at least reap all that is fairest in the other. Look yonder, child, beyond the boundary of the pines—look yonder, where Rome glitters in the sun, and remember that Raffaelle lies buried in the Pantheon."

"I do remember it."

"Aye, and remember that love is here, but fame is hereafter—that to be great is to be exposed to all the shafts of envy; but that to love thus is to wear an 'armoure against fate!' What to us are the changes of the years, the wars of kings, the revolutions of empires? We dwell in the conscious security of our love, as

"In a green island, far from all men's knowing;"

and, happen what may in the wide world beyond,

there abide 'till our content is absolute.' Heigho! I also used to dream, once upon a time, of art, and poetry, and fame; but that was before I knew how much had already been done—how little was left to do! Now I am wiser, and more indolent. Satisfied to appreciate, I wander from Shakespeare to Goethe, from Raffaelle to Rembrandt, from Plato to Bacon. I taste of all arts and all philosophies. 'Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light' for me; and yet what hope have I of ever compassing one half of the accumulated riches of the past? Ten lives would not be enough to read all the best books, and see all the best pictures in the world!"

"Nor ten times ten," I added, sadly. "Alas! to what end are we working, and of what avail is anything that we can do? Why paint pictures that can achieve no fame, or write books that will never be read? Why multiply failure upon failure; and why 'monster' our 'nothings' in the face of all that has been done by the greatest and the wisest? For my part, when I think of these things, I am hopeless."

"And for mine, Barbarina, I believe that the life of the *connoisseur* is as well spent as that of any other man on earth! It is for him that the author toils, and the painter mixes his colours; and neither of them could well live without him. He

reads the books that others write. He buys the pictures that others paint. He represents popular opinion, embodies the taste of the age, and keeps us in mind of all that we owe to the past. *Per Bacco!* I begin to have quite a respectful admiration for myself when I think of it!"

I could not help smiling.

"This is mere sophistry," I said. "You love an idle life, and are 'nothing if not critical;' and now you want to make your very idleness heroic. No, no, Hugh—confess that it is pleasanter to dream in libraries and galleries than to contribute to either; and that enjoyment is more agreeable than work!"

He laughed, and sprang lightly to his feet.

"Be just, Barbarina," he said. "Be just, if nothing more. A reckless dare-devil, such as I have been this many a year, scarcely deserves to be accused of idleness or dreaming. I am an Epicurean, if you will; but not a Sybarite."

"Be both," I cried, hastily; "be an idler, a dreamer, a trifler—anything you please; but never, never wander away into dangers and deserts again! You once talked to me of the pleasure of peril. Oh, I have never forgotten that phrase!"

"Foolish little wife! Forget it, dear, at once and for ever. Henceforth I shall only travel where I can take you with me, and that is

guarantee enough for my own safety. But the afternoon is waning, and I have still something to show you in Albano."

Upon this, we went down again into the town, passing our hotel by the way, and stopping before the heavy double doors of what seemed to be a handsome private residence. Here Hugh rang, and a very old woman admitted us. A paved carriage-way intersected the ground floor, and led out upon a gravelled space at the back. Beyond this lay extensive grounds, richly wooded, with vistas of lawn, and winding walks between.

"This is the Villa Castellani," said Hugh, passing through with a nod to the portress. "We will go over the gardens first, and then see the house. It is a strange, rambling, deserted place; but there is something romantic about it—something shady, quiet, and mediæval, which takes a peculiar hold on my imagination, and possesses a charm which I scarcely know how to define."

"Then you have been here before?"

"I once lodged in the house for two months. It was a long time ago—six or eight years, I suppose; but I remember every nook and corner as well as if I had left it only yesterday. Stay—this turning should lead to the ruins!"

We went down a broad walk, wide enough for a carriage drive, and completely roofed in by

thick trees. Weeds grew unheeded in the gravel, and last year's leaves lay thick on the ground. Here and there, in the green shade, stood a stone seat brown with mosses; or a broken urn; or a tiny antique altar, rifled from a tomb—and presently we reached a space somewhat more open than the rest, with a shapeless mass of reticulated brickwork, and a low arch guarded by two grim lions, in the midst. Here the leaves had drifted more deeply, and the weeds had grown more rankly than elsewhere; and a faint oppressive perfume sickened on the air. We pushed our way through the grass and brambles, and looked down into the darkness of that cavernous archway. A clinging damp lay on the old marble lions, and on the leaves and blossoms of the trailing shrubs that overgrew them. A green lizard darted by on a fragment of broken wall. A squirrel ran up the shaft of a stately stone pine that stood in the midst of the ruins.

I shuddered, and sighed.

"The place is strangely melancholy," I said. "What ruins are these?"

"Probably those of Pompey's villa," replied my husband; "but their history is lost. The estate now belongs to a noble Roman family, one of whose ancestral Cardinals built the house yonder, about a hundred and sixty years ago. They are

now too poor to keep it in repair, and they let it whenever they can get tenants to take it. The whole place is going fast to decay."

"And you once lived here for two whole months?"

"Aye, for two very pleasant months, during which I spent all my time wandering about these lakes and ruins, with a carbine on my shoulder and a book in my hand—like a literary bandit. How often I have lain among these very trees, with a volume of Tasso in my hand, dreaming and reading alternately, and peopling the shady avenues with Armida and her nymphs!"

But I hardly listened to him. I was fascinated by this gloomy arch leading away into subterranean darkness, and could think of nothing else.

"I wonder where it goes, and if it has been explored," I said. "These lions look as if they were guarding the secret of some hidden treasure. There ought to be a dreadful tale connected with the place!"

"There shall be one, if you wish it, *carina*. Let me see—we have a Cardinal, who is an intellectual voluptuary, fond of learning and pleasure, and in love with a beautiful peasant girl down in the village. We have gardens, with ancient ruins lying in the shadows of the trees—a

jealous lover lurking in the archway—twilight—an ambuscade—a revenge—a murder .... oh, it would make a charming story!"

"Then you shall put it together, and tell it to me as we drive back to Rome."

"Willingly; but come a few yards farther, where you see the light at the end of the avenue."

I followed, and we emerged upon a terrace that bounded the gardens on this side. The Campagna and the hills lay spread before us in the burning sunset, and a shining zone of sea bounded the horizon. Long shadows streamed across the marble pavement, and patches of brilliant light pierced through the carved interstices of the broken balcony. A little fountain dripped wearily in the midst, surmounted by a headless Triton, and choked with water-weeds; whilst all along the parapet, with many a gap, and many a vacant pedestal, the statues of the Cæsars stood between us and the sun.

When at length we went back, we took a path skirting the ridge of a deep hollow, where a forest of olives shivered greyly in the breeze. The house stood before us all the way, stately, but dilapidated; with closed windows and shattered cornices, and an open Belvedere on the top, where one shuddered to think how the wind must howl at night. Some-

thing of this I must have shown in my face, for Hugh, looking at me, said anxiously :—

"The place is solemn, but not sad; and to my mind, is only the more beautiful for its desolation."

"Yes," I replied, "it is very beautiful."

But I felt a strange oppression, nevertheless.

"And one might paint twenty pictures from these gardens alone."

"Yes, truly."

He glanced at me again, and seemed about to speak; but checked himself, and walked on silently. The same old woman was waiting at the house to receive us—such a weird, withered, tottering creature, that one might have fancied her as old as the building.

"The Hall of the Hercules, *signora*," said she, in a shrill treble, that quavered like the tones of a broken instrument.

It had once been a stately vestibule; but was now a lumber-room. Ladders, gardening tools, and rubbish of all kinds lay piled in the corners; and at the farther end a store of faggots and *fascine* was stacked against the wall. The frescoes on the ceiling were broken away in patches here and there. The tesselated pavement was defaced and soiled. Busts, black with the dust of years and draped with cobwebs, looked down from their

niches overhead, as if in solemn pity "for a glory left behind." Altogether it was a mournful place —still more mournful than the grounds and the ruins.

From this erewhile "Hall of the Hercules," we passed on through the chambers of the lower floor, preceded by our guide, with her bunch of rusty keys. They were all dusty and solitary alike. The daylight filtered drearily into them through half-opened shutters, and the doors complained upon their hinges. In some were broken mirrors, worm-eaten remains of costly furniture, and funereal hangings which fell to pieces at a touch, and sent up clouds of dust. Others were bare of everything save cobwebs; and all were profusely decorated with tarnished gilding; marble-pilasters, rich cornices, panellings from which the delicate arabesques were fast disappearing, and ceilings where "many a fallen old divinity" still presided, amid faded Cupids and regions of roses and blue clouds.

In the second storey, the rooms were smaller and cleaner, and contained, moreover, a scanty supply of uncomfortable modern furniture. It was this part, said the old *cicerone*, which his noble Highness graciously condescended to let during the season, reserving the lower floor to his own masterful use, or disuse, as the case might be.

"Then it must have been here that you lived, Hugh," I said, as we took our way from suite to suite.

"No—like a true hero I sought to climb above my fellows, and secured the top of the house. Up there, 'my soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.' I could do as I pleased, had a terrace to myself, and the key of the Belvedere. Oh, what songs and sonnets I scribbled by moonlight on that terrace-top, and how I used to twist them into pipe-lights the next morning!"

By this time we had reached the foot of the last staircase, and Hugh, springing forward, took the lead.

"See," said he, "these are my old quarters. What do you think of them?"

It was like passing from dark to light—from winter to summer—from a prison to a palace. The private apartments of a princess in a fairy tale could not have been more daintily luxurious. Ante-room, *salon*, library, and bed-room led one from another; and the library opened on a marble terrace with orange trees in tubs at all the corners, and a great stone vase of mignonette before the window. Exquisite furniture, glittering with pearl and ormolu; mosaic tables; walls, panelled with mirrors and paintings; gauzy hangings; carpets in which the feet sank noiselessly; precious

works of art in marble and terra-cotta; books, flowers, and all those minor accessories which give grace and comfort to a home, were here in abundance.

"Well," repeated my husband, laughingly, "what do you think of them?"

"I scarcely know what to think," I replied confusedly. "I . . . surely I—I seem to recognise some of these things—that bronze, for instance; and those vases—and this cabinet . . . nay, I am certain this is the cabinet that we bought the other day, in the Via Frattina! Why are they here?—and what does it all mean?"

"It means," said he, taking me by the hand, with a strange mixture of doubt and eagerness, "it means that all wise people will soon be leaving Rome for the hot season, and—and that I have re-engaged these old rooms of mine for your reception. See, here are all our recent purchases—our pictures, our statues, our mosaics. These shelves contain copies of your favourite authors; and in the next room you will find an easel, and a stock of artistic necessaries. Our bed-room windows overlook the hills about Gensano—our *salon* commands the town and market-place—our library opens towards the Campagna, with Ostia in the distance, and the gardens at our feet. Here, with all Latium mapped out before us, we can spend our

happy summer in absolute retirement. Here, wandering at will among lakes, forests, and mountains, we can sketch—we can read—we can ride—we can study this beautiful, half-savage Roman people, and trace in the present the influences of the past! Ah, dearest, you know not yet the enchantment of an Italian summer amid Italian hills! You know not what it is to breathe the perfume of the orange gardens—to lie at noon in the deep shadow of an ilex-grove, listening to the ripple of a legendary spring, older than history—to stroll among ruins in the purple twilight! Then up here, far from the sultry city and the unhealthy plains, we have such sunrises and sunsets as you, artist though you be, have never dreamt of—here, where the cool airs linger longest, and the very moon and stars look more golden than elsewhere! Tell me, dear heart, have I done well, and will my bird be happy in the nest that I have made for her?"

Seeing how flushed he was with his own eloquence, and how he had anticipated all things for my pleasure, I tried to seem glad—even to smile, and thank him. But, for all that, my heart was heavy with hope deferred; and, as we drove back to Rome in the grey dusk, I wept behind my veil, thinking of home, and seeing the term of my exile growing more and more indefinite.

Not many days after this, we moved out to

Albano, and established ourselves in *villeggiatura* at the Villa Castellani; taking with us for our only attendants two Italian women-servants and our faithful Tippoo. Alas! why was I not happy? Why was I restless, and why did I cast aside canvas after canvas, unable to settle to my art, or to enjoy the paradise around me? Wherefore when the transparent nights were radiant with fire-flies, did I yearn only for the red glimmer of one far-off village smithy; and wherefore, when the sun went down in glory behind the convent-crested brow of Monte Cavo, could I only sigh, and picture to myself how it was burning even now upon the Tudor windows at Broomhill?

CHAPTER XVI.

A VICTORY.

THE year wore on, and, towards autumn, my health gradually declined. I suffered no pain, and my physicians could discover no disease; but a strange mental and physical lassitude had taken possession of me, and I faded slowly. I seemed to have lost all my old strength and energy—all my love of life—all my appreciation of beauty. Lying languidly upon a sofa on the terrace, I used to listen to the noises in the market-place without ever caring to look down on the picturesque crowd beneath; and many a time I closed my eyes upon the landscape and the sky, in utter weariness of spirit, because "I had no pleasure in them." Thus day after day went by, and at length it was said that I must have change of air.

Unanimous upon this one point, my advisers could agree upon no other. One recommended Nice. Another was of opinion that Nice would be too mild, and advocated Florence. A third insisted upon the waters of Vichy. When they were all gone, I called Hugh to my side, and as he knelt down by my couch in the light of the golden afternoon, I clung to his neck, like a sick child, and whispered—

"Take me home, dear—only take me home!"

"Home?" he repeated, vaguely.

"Yes—to Broomhill. I shall never get well here, or anywhere, unless you take me to Broomhill!"

I felt him shudder in my arms, and that was all. After waiting some moments for the answer that did not come, I went on pleading.

"You don't know, Hugh, how I have longed for it, or how I have been thinking of it, these last months. If we had gone there first of all, though only for a few weeks, I believe I should have been content—content to stay with you here for years and years; but now .... you will not be angry with me, dear, if I tell you how I have yearned to go back?"

He shook his head, and drew my cheek closer to his own, so that I could not see his face.

"And you will not fancy that I have been unhappy, or discontented, or ungrateful?"

He shook his head again, with a quick gesture of deprecation.

"Well then, I—I feel as though I could never get well anywhere but at home, and as though I must die if you do not take me there. You see, dear, I have thought of it so much—thought, indeed, of nothing else for months. When you told me that you loved me, my first thought was for you, and my second for Broomhill. Ever since our marriage, I have looked forward to the happy day when we should go back there together, and make it our own, dear, quiet home. Ah, Hugh, you cannot know the charm there is for me in that word, Home! You cannot know how often I have lain awake in the pauses of the night, repeating it to myself, and trying to call back every tree in the old park—every picture, and corridor, and nook in the old house, till memory seemed to grow too vivid, and became almost pain!"

"My poor child," said my husband, tenderly, "this is a *mal de pays*."

"Perhaps so. I have fancied that it might be, more than once. No Swiss, I am sure, could sicken for his own Alps more than I sicken for Broomhill. But then, you see, dear, the happiest days of all my past life were linked with it—and I

have been so many, many years away from England .... and—and, like Queen Mary, I fancy if I were to die now, you would find the name of Broomhill engraven on my heart!"

He drew a long breath that sounded almost like a sob, and, disengaging himself from my embrace, got up, and paced about the room.

"How strange it is!" he said. "We love each other—why can we not live anywhere, be happy anywhere together? I have heard of those who were happy in a garret—a prison—a desert .... and this is the garden of the world! What is it? Fate? No—no—no! We make our own ends—our own pitfalls—our own sorrows. All might be well, if we would have it so .... but we cannot rest .... we are fools; and the fool's punishment must follow, sooner or later—sooner or later! Turn aside the lightning from heaven, and it comes up through the ground on which one stands!"

"Oh, Hugh! Hugh! you are angry with me!" I cried, terrified by these wild words. "Forgive me—pray forgive me! I could be happy with you in a dungeon—indeed, indeed I could. Only say that you forgive me!"

He mastered his agitation by a strong effort, and drew a chair, quite calmly, beside my couch.

"I have nothing to forgive," he said, in a low, measured voice. "Nothing whatever, Barbara.

You desire only what is just and reasonable. You have married the master of Broomhill, and you have a right to live at Broomhill."

"No, no—not a right!" I interrupted. "I wish to have no rights, save those which your dear love gives me!"

"And you have a right to live at Broomhill," he repeated, as if he had not heard me. "But, on the other hand, I dislike England. I prefer a continental life, and a continental climate; and I had hoped that you, educated and almost naturalised abroad, would share my tastes, and conform gladly to my wishes."

"I have tried to do so," I said, complainingly; for I was very weak, and felt hurt to hear him set it forth so coldly. "I have tried; and while my strength lasted, I succeeded. But though I was silent, I was always longing to go back—and now . . . and now my longing has worn me out, and, with me, all my power of resistance!"

He looked at me, and his forced coldness melted all at once.

"My Barbara!" he said. "My poor, pale Barbara!" And so leaned his forehead moodily in his two palms.

A long time went by thus—he bent and brooding; I anxiously watching him. By and by I raised myself from my pillows, and crept close to his knees.

"You will take me home, dear, will you not?" I said once more, trying to draw his hands down from his face.

"Yes. If you must go—yes," he answered, looking up with a face that startled me—it was so much whiter than my own. "I cannot let you fade, my Flower; but . . . God help us both!"

And with this he kissed me, and lifted me from the floor, and laid me tenderly upon the couch again; and then went out upon the terrace.

I had prevailed. The desire that had been upon my mind for so many months was spoken at last, and granted; and yet I felt uneasy, apprehensive, and but half satisfied. Was it well, I asked myself, to succeed against his will? Was it well to have evoked the first hint of dissension for my gratification? Might not ill come of it; and might I not, at least, have tried the air of Nice, or Florence, first? Wavering thus, I was more than once upon the point of calling to him—then I checked myself, and thought how happy I would make him at Broomhill; and how he should thank me by and by for having brought him there; and what a pleasure it would be to see him once more in the home of his fathers, respected and honoured, and bearing, as became him, 'the grand old name of gentleman.' Thus the moment, the precious moment of concession, went by; and I

wandered away into a train of dreams and musings.

It was almost dusk before Hugh came in again; but he had regained his composure, and spoke cheerfully of England and our journey. His nature was too generous to do a kindness by halves, and, since he had yielded, he yielded graciously. For all this, however, I saw the dark shade settle now and then upon his brow, and noted the effort by which it was dismissed.

In a few days more, we were on our way home.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST CLOUD ON THE HORIZON.

WHAT with waiting some days for finer weather at Civita Vecchia, and what with the delays occasioned by my fatigue at different points of the journey, we were more than three weeks travelling from Rome to London. I had begun to mend, however, from the day that we left Albano—I might almost say, from the hour that our return was resolved upon—and by the time I stepped on shore at Dover, I had already recovered my spirits, and much of my strength. We came home without having met any whom we knew, having rested a few days in Paris in a solitude as complete as that of Albano. Hilda and her husband were with the court at Fontainebleau; and Mrs. Churchill, who could not exist throughout the autumn, even in

Paris, without the excitement of a German Spa, had gone with my father to Homburg some ten days before. So we went our way like strangers, welcomed only by the hotel-keepers along the road; and, arriving in London towards the latter end of August, put up at Claridge's in Brook Street.

On the evening of the second day, as we were sitting at dessert, Hugh looked up suddenly, and said—

"You are going to make a pilgrimage to-morrow to your old home, are you not, Barbara?"

"To my old home and my old nurse, dear. I want to bring poor Goody to live with us at Broomhill."

"Do so, darling, by all means. She shall have one of my model cottages; or, if you prefer it, a nook in the old house, somewhere."

"Then we will let her choose, please, Hugh; but I think she will prefer a little cottage of her own to a great house full of servants."

"And in the meantime," said my husband, with something like a shade of embarrassment in his manner, "I think of running down to Broomhill myself to-morrow, for a few hours; just to—to see that all is in order before its little mistress makes her triumphal entry."

"What folly, dearest, when we are both going the very following day!"

"Ah, but that is no longer possible, *carina*. I have an appointment here with my lawyer for that precise evening; and my business may, perhaps, detain us in town till Monday, or even Tuesday next."

I looked down to conceal the tears which I could not prevent from springing to my eyes. This delay was almost more than I could bear; and I should have been ashamed to confess how keenly I felt it.

"Besides," continued he, "the servants do not yet know that we are in England. I ought to have written to Mrs. Fairhead by this day's post."

"Is Mrs. Fairhead the same housekeeper whom I remember?"

"The very same—an excellent old soul, whom I have tormented in various ways ever since I was born. By the way, she does not even know that her vagabond master brings a wife home with him; so, you see, it would never do to take her by surprise."

"You have not told her that we are married?"

"Not a bit of it. I wrote home a few weeks ago, to say that I was on the point of returning to England, and desired the house might be thoroughly ready in every part. I suppose, however, that I am bound to reveal the fact before you make your appearance."

"And—and shall you really go to-morrow?"

"I think so," replied he, carelessly. "And I also think that Mr. Claridge might find us a better wine. Tippoo, go down and inquire if they have any genuine white Hermitage, which they can particularly recommend."

Tippoo glided away; and for some moments we were uncomfortably silent.

"I—I hope you will not be long away, Hugh," I faltered, presently. "I do not like being left all . . . ."

"Left?" echoed he. "Why, you little goose, I shall come back by the last train."

"What, the same day?"

"Of course—in time for supper, if your highness will consent to dine early and sup late."

"But how is it possible . . . ."

"Everything is possible, where there are railways and steam-engines. The station, *carina*, is within eleven miles of home; and the express whirls me over all the rest of the distance in two hours and a half. I'll be bound, now, that you had forgotten all about the railway, and thought I should be two or three days away from you!"

"I had forgotten it. Remember, I have been living a conventual life these last years, and the face of the world is changed since I looked upon it last. But don't you think we might go home on

Saturday, husband? It is so long to wait till Monday or Tuesday next!"

He passed his hand caressingly over my hair, as if I were a spoiled child, and sighed.

"Perhaps," he said; "perhaps. We shall see."

"And tell me," I whispered, nestling closer to his side, "is Satan quiet enough for me? I should so like to ride that dear, beautiful creature."

"Satan? Oh, poor old Satan! I don't even know if he is still alive. He must be sixteen years old by this time, at the least."

"But if he is alive . . . ."

"If he is still alive, he is so old that he is sure to be quiet enough for a baby. But I shall buy my Barbarina a dainty cream-coloured Arab, fit for a princess's mounting; and a little chaise and pair of Shetlands that Cinderella might envy."

"Oh, no, Hugh—not for me."

"Not for you, you foolish birdie? And why not, pray? Can anything be too good or too rare for you? Why, I mean my wife to be the best dressed and the best mounted, as well as the best loved little woman in the county! And that reminds me that you must be measured for a new habit, before we leave town; and the day after to-morrow we must go shopping together, and I will show you what a lady's man I can be, and how

learned I am in silks, satins, laces, cashmeres, and *chiffonnerie*."

"But, dear husband, what do I want with laces and satins—I, a poor little painter, whose only happiness is to be quite alone with you, and quite unnoticed?"

"My child," said Hugh, with a look half of sad reproach, "we should have stayed away, if we desired to live on in our solitary paradise. In Suffolk, every one knows me. I cannot live *incognito* on my own acres. When it is known that I am at Broomhill, and that I have brought a wife to my hearth, we shall be inundated with visitors and invitations. Ah, Barbarina! you had not thought of that."

I was dismayed.

"But—but we need not see them," I said. "We can refuse their invitations."

"Only to a certain extent. I cannot suffer my neighbours to suppose that my wife is not presentable. There are families whom we must receive and visit, or we shall appear ridiculous. Uncivilized as I am, *carina*, I have no mind to become the laughing-stock of the county."

"But . . . ."

"But there is no help for it, little wife. I am willing, even now, if you desire it, to go back to Italy—or travel in any direction you please, East,

West, North or South, without going one mile farther on the road to Suffolk; but if the master of Broomhill returns thither with his wife at his side, he must not forget that he is the last representative of a long line of English gentlemen who never yet closed their doors in the faces of their neighbours, or neglected the good old English virtue of hospitality."

It was the first time he had ever spoken to me thus. It was the first time he had ever used a tone even bordering upon authority. It was the first time that I had ever heard him express anything like pride of birth, or respect for the observances of society. Startled, confused, almost abashed, I knew not how to answer."

"You—you did not think thus seven years ago," I faltered. "You shut yourself up like a hermit; and it was Mrs. Sandyshaft who . . . ."

"Who dragged me into society," interrupted he, impatiently. "I know it. But I was not a married man; and I was just seven years younger than now. As I said before, Barbara, I cannot let the world suppose that I have made a *mésalliance*, and am ashamed to introduce my wife in the county. We will turn back, if you please. God knows, I came here only for your sake, and would far rather retrace the pleasant road that leads to liberty; but, if we go forward, we must be prepared to occupy

our home in a manner consistent with our own dignity. Which shall it be—Broomhill or Italy?"

"I—I don't know," I replied, feeling half-hurt, half-angry, and bitterly disappointed. "I must have time to consider—I will tell you when you come back to-morrow evening."

"Nay, that will hardly do, my child; because if we turn back, there will be no need for me to go down at all."

I went over to the window, and looked out for some minutes, in silence.

"Well," said Hugh, after a considerable pause, "have you made up your mind, Barbarina?"

"Yes, Hugh, I have made up my mind. We will go to Broomhill."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PIOUS PILGRIMAGE.

It was a dull, grey day, when (having breakfasted very early, and seen Hugh step into the cab which was to convey him to the Eastern Counties Station) I ordered a fly to be brought round, and desired to be driven to that familiar suburb, every street and house of which I knew by heart. The way, however, was long, and the approach from this side of London so new to me, that till we turned into the High Street, I scarcely recognised any of the old topography. Even there, nothing seemed quite the same. New houses had sprung up; the trades in the shops were many of them changed; a smart terrace occupied the site of the stone-yard by the canal; and a church stood on the waste ground where the boys used to play at

cricket on summer afternoons. Seeing all these changes, I began to fear lest the old house might be gone; but just as the doubt occurred to me it came in sight, gloomy as ever, behind the dusty trees.

Finding myself so near, I stopped the carriage and went forward on foot, with a strange sensation of being still a child and having left the place but yesterday. I looked up at the windows—they were blacker and blanker than ever. I rang the bell, and its echoes jangled painfully in the silence. Then, after a long, long pause, a footstep slowly crossed the paved space between the house-door and the gate; a key grated rustily in the lock; and not Goody, but a dark and sullen-looking woman stood before me. I asked for Mrs. Beever.

"Mrs. Beever?" repeated she, holding the door jealously ajar. "I never heard the name."

Never heard the name! This answer so confounded me that I scarcely knew what to say next.

"She had charge of the house," I faltered.

"*I* have charge of the house," replied the woman, "and it's let."

With this she seemed about to shut the door; but I stayed her by a gesture.

"Let!" I reiterated. "Let! Mr. Churchill . . . ."

"Mr. Churchill is gone to live abroad," said she. "If you want his address, I have it on a card, indoors."

I shook my head, and, being still weak, and somewhat overcome, leaned against the doorway for support.

"I want the old servant," I said; "the old servant who was here before the house was given up. If you can tell me where to find her, I shall be very thankful."

She shook her head impatiently. She knew nothing of any such person. She could give me Mr. Churchill's address, if I wanted it; but not his servant's. That was no part of her business. And again she made as if she would shut the door.

I took out my purse and spoke gently to her, ungentle as she was.

"Will you let me go over the house?" I said, placing a half-crown in her hand.

She glanced sharply at me, and at the coin.

"But the house is let," she said again.

"I know it. Still, if you are alone here, you can let me go through the rooms. I—I lived here once; and I should like to see the place again."

She seemed about to refuse; but looked again at the money, and put it in her pocket.

"Well, come in," she said, a little more civilly. "I suppose there can be no harm in that."

So I passed in. She locked the door behind me, like a jailor, and followed me into the house. With this I would willingly have dispensed; but she kept me in sight, suspiciously, from room to room, through all the lower floors. They were mostly bare, or contained only worthless lumber. I asked her what had been done with Mr. Churchill's furniture, and if there had been a sale; but found that she knew, or would know, nothing. At the foot of the garret stairs she paused, thinking it useless, I suppose, to follow farther. I went up alone.

Alas! my lonely garrets, where we used to play as little children, half fearful of the silence when the ringing of our baby-laughter died away! Where, a few years later, I spent so many bitter solitary hours, blistering my books with tears, and rebelling against the fate that made me younger than my sisters. Where I come back now, after long years, to find upon the walls strange traces of my former self, scribbled sentences of childish writing, and charcoal outlines, half-defaced, but full, to me, of their old meanings! This, I remember, was a landscape; this, Sir Hudibras and Sidrophel; this, the vision of Mirza—all suggested by the books I had read, and all bearing, at the least, some stammering evidence to my inborn love of art. I looked at them sadly, as one long freed

might decipher his own writing on the walls of what had been his cell, and sighed, with a retrospective pity, for my bygone self—then, turning to the window, saw the strip of weedy garden, and the foul canal with its sluggish barges creeping by, just as they used to creep in that old time; and far away, beyond the spires and house-tops, those well-remembered hills that had mocked me so often with their summer greenness. I had trodden the snows and glaciers of the Alps since last I looked on them—I had dwelt with Rome and the Tiber before my windows, and seen the sun go down behind Soracte, "his own beloved mountain;" but I question if I ever looked on either with such emotion as I felt this day in sight of the only glimpse of nature that gladdened my childhood.

I seemed to have been here only a few moments, but I suppose the time went quickly; for the woman presently came up, as if to see what I could be doing there so long. So I hurried down again, almost glad to be spared the pain of staying longer. At the house-door I paused, and gathered a few leaves of dusty ivy.

"And you have no idea of where I can find the servant?" I asked, for the last time.

She shook her head sullenly, and unlocked the outer door.

"Perhaps they may be able to tell you over

there," she said, pointing to a baker's at a distant corner.

I passed out, and would have bade her good morning; but she shut the door behind me in an instant, and turned the key. I never crossed that threshold again. Never again.

At the baker's they could tell me nothing; but referred me to a grocer's next door. The grocer directed me to Pink's Row, the third garden on the right. Mrs. Beever, he said, had been there —might be there still, for aught that he could tell. At all events I should there learn all particulars. So, still leaving the carriage in sight, I took the grocer's little daughter for my guide, and went in search of Pink's Row.

It opened from a noisy by-street, all alive with stalls, and consisted of some eight or ten poor dwellings, each with a narrow space of garden railed off in front. In one or two of these stood blackened skeletons of trees, and rotting summer-houses, and, perhaps, a sickly sunflower tied, like a martyr, to a stake. But most of them were mere uneven patches of rubbish and waste ground, trodden out of all productiveness, and gone utterly to ruin.

Though very small—smaller, it even seemed, than the others—the third house to the right looked clean and decent. A white blind, and a flower in

the window, gave it an air of cheerfulness; and a little child playing on the threshold added that precious link that binds poetry to life in the poorest home. I dismissed my guide, and went up to the door alone. There were two women in the little room; one by the window, stitching busily—the other attending to something on the fire. Though her back was turned, I knew the last directly.

"Goody," I said, forgetting at once all that I had meant to say by way of preparation. "Goody, dear, don't you know me?"

And Goody, with an inarticulate cry, dropped her saucepan, and stared at me as if I were a ghost—then laughed, and sobbed, and flung her arms about me, and said all the loving, foolish things that she could think of.

"But sure, my lamb," she said, when the first outburst was over, "sure you've not come home, thinking to find the old house as it was, and with nowhere else to go? Maybe you didn't know your father was still in foreign parts, and never likely to return? Or is he with you, deary? And have you left the school for good? And has he changed his mind, meaning to live in England, after all; and you with him? Then, to think of his having married again—ah, my pretty, I never thought he would have done that! And to think of little Hilda being married too, and to a fine foreign

gentleman with a title to his name! Dear, dear, how things have changed! How things have changed!"

"And we also," I answered, holding her hands in mine, and smiling to think how much I had to tell her. "And we also, Goody. Don't you think I am changed, since you last saw me?"

"Changed! Why, you were a little child—a little, pale, wee, delicate child, when you went away, my deary; and now .... Why, I can hardly bring myself to believe it is the same little Barbara! And yet I knew you—should have known you anywhere—anywhere! You have the same brown eyes, and the same smile, and the same wave in your hair .... oh, my darling, what a happy day for me!"

I drew a chair beside her, and prepared for a long chat. The younger woman had left the room, taking the child with her; and we were quite alone. First I drew her simple story from her, and then I told her mine.

Of all that had befallen me I found her still ignorant, and of my father she had only heard through the agent who from time to time transmitted money to her. The house, it seemed, had been given up six months ago, and she, after her life's devotion, dismissed with a year's salary and a message that Mr. Churchill intended, for the future,

to reside abroad. But of this she did not even complain. She had saved money, and was now living, happily enough, with her married niece, whom I remembered as a tall girl who played with us sometimes when we were children. As for the furniture, some had been sold, and some was stored away in a warehouse in the neighbourhood. More than this she could not tell me.

Then I bade her prepare for a great surprise, and so took off my glove, and, smiling, held my left hand up before her eyes. Ah, me! what laughing and crying, what broken exclamations and eager questions! Was I really married? Was I happy? Was my husband also a fine foreign gentleman with a title to his name? Where did I see him? How long was it ago? And so forth, in an endless tide of questions. But her delight when she found that he was an English gentleman, and her wonder when I told her the circumstances of our first acquaintance, knew no bounds; so I gave her the whole story from beginning to end. When I had finished, she drew a long breath, and said—

"Now, my lamb, please begin, and tell it to me all over again; for I'm confused in my head, you see, and can hardly bring myself to believe it at first!"

Whereupon I repeated my narrative, with some

abridgements, and having brought it once more to a close, found that it was more than time to go. But she would hardly part from me.

"I will come again to-morrow, Goody," I said, lingering on the threshold with her hand upon my shoulder. "I will come to-morrow, and take you with me to our hotel. You must see my husband, and love him, for my sake."

"Bless his heart!" said Goody.

"And by and by, when we are quite settled at Broomhill, you shall come and live with me, dear; and never, never leave me again!"

"If I might only live to nurse another little Barbara!" ejaculated Goody, with her apron to her eyes.

"So good-bye, till to-morrow."

She shook her head, and embraced me again, and seemed so sad that, when half way down the garden, I turned back and repeated—

"Only till to-morrow, remember!"

"May-be, my lamb. May-be," she sobbed; "but I feel as if to-morrow would be never! I don't fare to feel as if I should see you again!"

But I waved my hand and hurried away, and she stood watching me as long as I remained in sight.

The evening was very lonely without Hugh. It

was the first time that we had been parted by so many miles and so many hours, and it seemed as if the moment of his return would never come. I sent down for a railway-book; and, when it was brought, could not fathom the mystery of the time-tables. I took up a novel, and found my thoughts wandering far away from the story. I threw aside the novel for the 'Times,' and the first column that met my eyes recorded a "terrible railway accident and fearful loss of life." Thoroughly restless and nervous, I then took a seat by the window, and watched every vehicle that came and went, till impatience became agony, and I felt as if I must go down to the station to be sure that nothing had happened on the line that day. Just at the very last moment, when it was about five-and-thirty minutes past eleven, and I had made up my mind to ring for a fly without further delay, a cab dashed up to the door; a gentleman jumped out; there was a rapid footfall on the stairs; and Hugh burst into the room.

"Oh, husband, at last! Thank heaven, at last!"

"At last, my darling, and in capital time, too," he replied, cheerily. "The train was in to a moment, and my cabman had a famous horse, and here I am, hungry as a hunter! Why, you look quite agitated—what is the matter?"

"You were so late, Hugh; and I have been reading about a dreadful accident in the newspaper, and . . . ."

He interrupted me with a kiss, rang loudly for his supper, closed the window shiveringly, and muttered something about "this diabolical climate."

"Nonsense, sir," I said, "you ought to like your native temperature. It is a delicious night, coming after an oppressively hot day."

"A delicious purgatory! I'll buy a suit of bear-skins."

"Do, dear. It will be quite in character. But have you no news for me? What did Mrs. Fairhead say, when you told her? How does the old place look? Were they not very glad to see you? Is Satan still alive?"

"I will not answer a single question till I have had my supper."

"Nay, one, dearest—only one. Did you hear any intelligence of—of my aunt?"

Hugh looked grave, and shook his head.

"I am sorry to say that I did, my Barbarina," he replied. "Mrs. Sandyshaft is ill—very ill."

"Ill!" I echoed, all my gaiety deserting me in a moment. "What is the matter with her?"

"I don't know. Some kind of low fever, I fancy. They told me she had been confined to her bed for the last fortnight or more."

"Low fever—so old as she is—so strong and healthy as she has always been! Do they say she is in danger?"

"Indeed, I fear so. Doctor Topham, I am told, is far from sanguine, and . . ."

"Let us go," I interrupted, vehemently. "Let us go at once. Oh, I thank God that we are in England!"

I had risen, in my excitement, and moved towards the door; but he brought me back to my chair, and took my hands gently between his own.

"Be patient, my darling," he said. "I have already considered what must be done."

"Considered! Oh, heavens! as if there were time for considering!"

"Plenty of time, if one be only calm. Mrs. Sandyshaft is very ill, but I have not heard that she is dying. Besides, we cannot go at once. It is impossible."

"Nothing is impossible! with post-horses . . ."

"With money and post-horses," said my husband, "we could certainly travel all night, very uncomfortably; but to-morrow morning, by the better help of the railway, we shall reach Ipswich in three hours and a half. Besides, we can telegraph in advance, and have a post-chaise waiting for us at the station."

"You are right, Hugh," I admitted, after a brief silence. "Forgive my impatience."

"As heartily as you forgive your aunt for her long neglect."

"Hush, Hugh! I remember only her love."

Just then, the supper was brought, and we sat down to table. Hungry as he said he was, Hugh ate but little, and made no effort to resume his temporary cheerfulness. By and by, the supper was removed, and the hookah brought; but the hour of our most genial intercourse went by in unbroken silence; and the cloud that had brooded over Hugh for the last few weeks came and settled more heavily than ever on his brow:—settled like the darkness on the earth; like the weight on my own heart.

Alas! dear Goody, there are such things as presentiments, let those deny them who will! I shall be far away to-morrow—far away!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES.

It was between three and four o'clock, and we had been travelling by rail and road for nearly five hours; so we left our spattered post-chaise down at the inn, and walked up the hill together. There had been rain during the greater part of the day; but the clouds were now clearing off rapidly, and the red sunlight of the autumnal afternoon glittered on the wet leaves in the hedges, and in the rain-pools on the road. Presently a labourer passed us, driving a tumbril with the name of Ann Sandyshaft painted on the side.

"Good evening, friend," said Hugh. "Is your mistress better to-day?"

The man touched his cap, and stared at us vacantly. Hugh repeated the question.

"Oh, aye," drawled he, "she's bad enough, and to spare, master. Yon comes the Doctor. Ask him."

And with this, and a prolonged shake of the head, he plodded on his way. At the same moment a single horseman came round the bend of the road behind us, and was about to pass on with a civil salutation, when Hugh stepped forward and took the pony by the reins.

"Dr. Topham," said he, "I hope you are not going to pass me like a stranger?"

"God bless my soul, sir!" exclaimed Dr. Topham. "Is it—is it possible that I see Mr. Farquhar of Broomhill?"

"Such as he is, you do," replied Hugh. And they shook hands heartily.

"You—you come upon us, Mr. Farquhar, like an apparition," said the little man, still flurried and surprised. "Egad, sir, you did the same thing a few years ago, and startled the whole county by appearing suddenly, like a jack in a box! What part of the globe do you come from now, pray?"

"From Italy," replied Hugh, "where I have been residing for nearly a year."

"Italy! Why Randall told me the other day that you were in America!" ejaculated the Doctor, with a side glance at myself. "'Pon my life, the fellow said America to hoax me!"

"Randall is an excellent steward," said Hugh, quietly, "and knows that I do not care to let 'the stones prate of my whereabout.' America does well enough for an answer."

The Doctor scratched his ear, and looked puzzled. Then glanced at me again.

"I suppose," said he, pointing with his whip-handle in the direction of the hall, "I suppose you have heard the sad news over yonder, Mr. Farquhar? Our poor friend, Mrs. Sandyshaft—very ill, very ill, indeed. Low fever—debility—my second visit to her to-day, sir—my second visit."

"Indeed I have heard of it," replied Hugh, "and that brings me to the subject of my sudden arrival. But I have not yet introduced you to my wife. Barbara, I think you are not unacquainted with the name of Doctor Topham?"

Dr. Topham took off his hat, and bowed profoundly.

"I—I really had no idea," he stammered. "This is surprise upon surprise! The—the honour—the pleasure—the—the congratulations . . . Egad, I'm so amazed that I don't know what to say!"

"Amazed to find Benedick a married man, or amazed that Beatrice should turn out to be an old acquaintance, eh, Doctor?" laughed my husband.

The little man looked more bewildered than ever.

"Excuse me," he said, "but, proud as I am to become acquainted with a lady so—in short, with Mrs. Farquhar—I cannot presume to—to lay claim to any previous . . . ."

"For shame, Dr. Topham!" I interposed. "Do you forget Barbara—little Barbara Churchill?"

Dr. Topham deliberately dismounted, put his hat on the pony's head, and kissed me on both cheeks.

"From this time forth," said he, "I will never be astonished at anything."

In a few moments more he had passed his arm through the bridle, and we were all walking on slowly, side by side, with the gables of Stoneycroft Hall peeping over the trees some little distance ahead.

"I am glad you are here," he said; "more glad than I can tell you. And I am also very glad to have met you before you went up to the house. The shock might have excited her too much, and this enables me to prepare her for it. The sight of your face, Barbara, will do her more good than all the physic in my surgery. I beg your pardon—old habit, you see! Mrs. Farquhar, I should say."

"No, no, Doctor—please call me Barbara."

"Well then, Barbara, I look upon you as a great tonic to be employed for my patient's benefit. Poor soul! how she has longed to see you!"

"Oh, Doctor Topham! has she ever really said so?"

"Said so? Hundreds of times."

"Then she has not forgotten me?"

"If she had forgotten you, would she have sent for you?"

"What do you mean? Sent for me?"

"Why, of course. If not, how should you be here now? You—surely you received my letter?"

It was now my turn to be puzzled.

"I know of no letter," I said; "and if you have written to my father, I have heard nothing of it. He is at Spa, and very seldom writes to me."

"Then mine, being addressed to his old club in London, has most likely followed him," said the Doctor; "which explains both his silence and yours. But what lucky accident brought you home? And how did you know that Mrs. Sandyshaft was ill? And . . . and, above all, how is it that at the very time when we believed you to be still learning your lessons in some foreign school, you turn out to be married and settled—married, by all that's incomprehensible, to Farquhar of Broomhill?"

"Is that so wonderful?" asked Hugh, amused at the Doctor's mystification. "You forget that Barbara and I have known each other ever since I

was last in England. It is quite an old attachment."

"An old attachment?" repeated Doctor Topham, incredulously. "Humph! I should as soon have expected to see her married to the Wandering Jew."

"Thank you; but the disparity is hardly so great."

"I don't allude to your age, Mr. Farquhar, but to your habits," said the Doctor, quickly. "You must remember that we are accustomed to think of you as the Flying Dutchman. We hear of you as being everywhere by turns, and nowhere long; and that you could ever commit anything so civilised as matrimony, never entered the sphere of our calculations. Then to think that Barbara, our little Barbara, should be . . . Upon my soul, Mr. Farquhar, I believe it would have surprised me less if you had married an Indian begum, or a North American squaw!"

"You do my taste but little honour, then," said Hugh, "and give me credit for nothing but my love of locomotion. A pretty reputation for a county gentleman! But see, Barbara, here we are at the garden-gate, where you so often ran to meet me. The place looks just the same."

Ah me! it did, indeed. Nothing was changed. There were the same roses on the porch—the same

swallows' nests under the eaves—the same laurels at the gate—the same old trees showering down their russet leaves upon the pond!

The doctor tied his pony to the staple in the wall, as he used to tie it years ago, and preceded us up the path. In the porch he paused, and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"God bless you, Barbara," he said, earnestly. "If anything can save her now, it will be your presence. I scarcely hoped to see you, child; and had it depended on your father, I don't believe you would have been here now. But it depended on a higher will. There is a Providence in the chance that brought you—a great and gracious Providence."

Saying which, he reverently took off his hat, and I noticed for the first time how his hair had silvered since last I saw him.

"She is my oldest friend," he added, sorrowfully, "and the best I ever had. Hush! go into the parlour, and wait till I have been upstairs."

We went into the little parlour with the deep bay window, which I remembered so well. A strange servant was preparing the doctor's tea, but dropped a startled curtsey at the sight of strangers, and vanished. There stood my aunt's chair and footstool, and yonder, in its old place, the bookcase half filled with the ponderous Encyclopædia.

I sat down in the nearest seat, faint with agitation and fatigue; while my husband, absorbed in his own thoughts, stood looking out upon the garden.

"Of course, Barbara," he said, after a long silence, "you will not think of leaving here for the next day or two?"

"I suppose not," I answered, with a sigh.

"I have sent Tippoo to Broomhill for a horse," he added.

"For a horse, Hugh?"

"Certainly. You did not suppose that I could establish myself here without invitation?"

I had not thought about it; but it seemed like an evil omen that my husband should go home this first night to his own roof, alone.

"No, no," I said, "do not do that. Stay here, or take me with you."

"I cannot stay here," he said hastily, "in a sick-house—uninvited—unexpected—it would be impossible. And as for taking you with me—why, you are no longer a child to ride before me on the pummel!"

"We could get the postchaise which we left in the village!"

But he waved his hand impatiently.

"Nonsense, darling," he said, "you talk like a child. It is clearly your place to stay, and mine to go. I shall be down here again to breakfast, and

you will scarcely have had time to miss me. Why, what folly is this? Tears for such a trifle!"

"It is no trifle to me. Call it folly, superstition, if you please; but I cannot bear that you should go back to Broomhill without me. I feel as if it were a bad beginning to our home-life; and—and we have never yet been parted . . . ."

The door opened, and Dr. Topham came in.

"I have kept you waiting a long time," said he; "but I was obliged to prepare her by degrees. She knows now that you are here, Barbara, and is ready to see you; but we must be careful not to excite her. She is very weak to-day."

"But not in danger?"

"In no immediate danger. If, however, she were not to rally within the next twelve hours, I should begin to fear seriously for the result. But you have been giving way to nervousness, and unfitting yourself for the interview. That is very wrong, Barbara. Tears and trembling do no good to an invalid, and often a great deal of harm. You must compose yourself before you go up."

Seeing how Hugh persisted, and how lightly he put my remonstrance aside, I felt angry with myself and him, and forced myself to be firm.

"I am not nervous now," I said. "You may trust me to go up."

"I think I may," he replied, approvingly. "You

are a brave little woman. Please to remember, however, that your aunt is not in a state to bear any farther surprise or excitement. You are still little Barbara Churchill, and Mr. Farquhar here is still at the Antipodes. Let this be understood between us."

"With all my heart."

"Then, follow me."

So we went, leaving Hugh still loitering gloomily about the parlour, with the twilight thickening fast, and the rain beginning to pelt against the panes. The next moment I was on the threshold of the sick-chamber, forgetting all my lesser troubles in the sight of that curtainless bed, and the gaunt figure reclining on it, like a statue on a tomb. Her face was turned towards the window, so that her profile came for an instant between me and the light, stern as ever, but sharpened by time and sickness. Her hands lay listlessly upon the counterpane. Her hair was drawn back beneath the same plain cap that she always used to wear. After all, she was not so much changed as I had expected. As the door closed, she turned her head and said, faintly and slowly :—

"Bab, is it you?"

In answer to which I kissed her on the brow, and said, as composedly as I could :—

"Yes, aunt, it is I."

She waved me back, by a feeble gesture, and pointed to the foot of the bed.

"Stand there, Bab," she said, "and take that bonnet off. I want to look at you."

I obeyed her and stood there, holding my breath lest it should break into sobs. When she had looked long enough, she beckoned me back, and bade me sit beside her. Then, turning her face again to the window—

"The light is going," she said. "Put the blinds back, that I may watch it to the last."

A servant sitting by the fire rose and drew them back; but the sky was wild and dark, and the rain continued to come in heavy gusts.

"A bad night at sea," observed the doctor, briskly. "I don't envy those who are beating about the Atlantic in this treacherous wind."

But she seemed scarcely to hear him, and kept her eyes fixed upon the fading twilight. When it was quite gone, and all beyond the casement looked darker than within, she sighed heavily, asked for lights, and complained that the darkness seemed to weigh upon her.

"Bab," she said, after awhile, "you look older than I expected."

"I am eighteen, dear aunt," I replied, "and it is seven years since you saw me."

"Tush, you are a child still. Only eighteen! But you look older."

To which, being warned by a sign from the doctor, I made no answer.

"You have had no troubles?" she asked, after another pause. "You are not unhappy?"

"No—my troubles have been few, and I shall be quite happy when you are well again."

Something like a faint smile passed over her face, as I said this and took her hand in mine. Alas! how thin and weak it was, and I remembered it so firm and masculine!

"Poor Bab!" she murmured. "Poor little Bab! I knew you would come back to me at last!"

And with this she closed her eyes, and seemed to fall suddenly asleep. The doctor laid his finger on his lip, and drew a chair softly to the fire; but I could not stir, for her hand remained in mine, and I feared to wake her. And still the wind moaned round the gables, and the rain came and went in stormy bursts; and, save the dropping of a cinder on the hearth, or the ticking of my aunt's great watch upon the chimney-piece, all within was silent as the grave. A long time went by thus; and at last, being myself very weak and tired, I also fell into an uneasy sleep, from which I woke up every few minutes without the power to keep myself from dropping off again. By and

by, something, I knew not what, roused me all at once, and seeing that my aunt still slept, and that Dr. Topham was nodding in his chair, I sat up and listened. Hush! is it a horse's footfall on the wet road? Is that the latch of the side-gate? Do I not hear a sound like the cautious opening of a door downstairs?

Breathlessly, and by the gentlest degrees, I drew my hand away without waking her, crept to the door, felt my way along the corridor, and ran down in the dark, taking, by a kind of instinct, the passage leading to the back of the house.

I found him standing by the open door, pencilling some words on a leaf torn from his pocket-book, while the servant stood beside him with a lanthorn. Seeing me, he crushed the paper in his hand and flung it away.

"I was bidding you good-night, *carissima*," he said, in Italian; "but paper farewells are not worth the having. I am glad you have come, though I would not send for you."

"Cruel! Then you will go?"

"I must. Hush! do not try to persuade me. It is better thus, and yet—and yet I am weak enough to yield, if you look at me with those imploring eyes! No—no—I must go, for your sake more than mine. Oh! Barbara, Barbara, why did you bring me back to England?"

"What can you mean?" I cried. "For God's sake, stay with me. You are not well, Hugh!"

"Nor ill, my love. Pshaw! it is hard to kiss and ride away, like a knight in a novel .... but the rain beats in upon you, and if I close this door I shall not have courage to open it again! Good-bye, my wife, my own—the night will be long without thee!"

Thus, clasping me closely in his arms, he kissed me twice or thrice; broke away, as if he dared not trust his resolution; sprang into the saddle; and was gone.

All without was intensely dark. I could see nothing—nothing but the groom leisurely preparing to follow his master, and the rainpools lying round the door. I could not even hear his horse's footfalls, for the raving of the wind. So, cold and heavy-hearted, I came in and closed the door, and thought how empty the house seemed now that he was no longer in it—how empty life would be without him—and, above all, how strange his moods had been of late, how irritable, how impatient, how wayward! Musing and wondering thus, perplexing myself with questions that I could not answer, and with doubts that I could not solve, I made my way slowly back to the door of my aunt's chamber—then, remembering the scrap of writing that he had thrown away, stole down again

to look for it. It was but a tiny crumpled leaf, and the wind had blown it into a distant corner; but I found it, for all that, and rescued it from the dust, and smoothed it out tenderly, as if it were a sentient thing to be prized and comforted.

There were only a few words scrawled hastily in pencil—a few Italian words, beginning with "*anima mia*," and breaking off abruptly before the ending of the first sentence; but the "*anima mia*" was enough. It consoled, it made me happy. I felt that I was no longer alone, and that his love and his thoughts would be with me all the weary night. "*Anima mia*"—*my Soul!* Was I indeed his soul? his very soul? more than his heart—more than his wife—more even than himself? Nay, better than himself—his soul, the spiritual and divine part of his nature—the gift of God! I kissed the paper, hid it in my bosom, and went up again to my place by the bedside. Alas! on what trifles do our smiles and tears depend, and how eagerly we interpret all things to our comfort! I had already forgotten much that was unexplained in his conduct, much that had pained me in his speech; and, child that I was! blamed only myself for my past uneasiness.

My aunt continued to sleep all that evening, and Dr. Topham to sit before the fire, drinking strong tea to keep himself awake. At ten o'clock,

seeing how worn out I was, he insisted on dismissing me for the night, and so I found myself once more occupying the same bedroom which was mine, years ago. Perhaps I fell asleep dreaming the same dreams, and, waking, found myself whispering the same name as of old!

CHAPTER XX.

MY AUNT AND THE DOCTOR CONTINUE TO DIFFER.

"Mrs. S.," said Dr. Topham, "you are considerably better this morning."

"Nothing of the kind," replied my aunt. "I feel much weaker."

"That is because the fever has left you."

My aunt shook her head.

"And for that very reason," persisted the doctor, "you are better."

"I am a great deal worse," said my aunt, "and worn out for want of sleep."

"But you have slept profoundly all night long," urged the doctor.

"Not a wink," said my aunt.

"Thirteen hours, by my watch," said the doctor.

"Thirteen fiddlesticks!" ejaculated my aunt contemptuously.

The doctor turned red, and took up his hat with great dignity.

"I presume, Mrs. Sandyshaft," said he, "that I may be allowed to trust the testimony of my senses. I tell you that you have slept, and I tell you that you are better. If you do not choose to believe me, you are at liberty to call in any other opinion you please."

"Of course I am," said my aunt, tartly. "I knew that without your telling me."

Dr. Topham bowed his stiffest bow.

"And as to the matter of better or worse, I suppose *I* am the best judge of my own feelings," added my aunt.

The doctor bowed again.

"If I choose to die, it's my business, and concerns nobody but myself—eh?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"And if I choose to live".....

"If you *choose* to live, Mrs. Sandyshaft," interrupted the doctor, dwelling somewhat satirically on the verb, "you will also *choose*, I hope, to assign me some little credit for my share in helping you to do so."

My aunt smiled good humouredly.

"Topham," said she, "you are an idiot, and I

have always told you so. I suppose I am better, or I should not have the spirit to quarrel with you."

"Quarrel with me as much as you please, my dear friend," replied the little man, with a sudden break in his voice, and an odd quivering of the lip. "Abuse me to your heart's content—I deserve it all, and I was a fool to be irritated. I ought to have been glad—I am glad—I—I am more glad than I know how to express. Bless my heart, you couldn't have aggravated me yesterday, if your life had depended on it!"

"I don't believe I could," admitted my aunt; "but where's Bab all this time?"

Whereupon Bab, who had been listening behind the door, with a strong inclination to laugh and an equally strong inclination to cry, came in precipitately, and spoilt the situation by yielding to both weaknesses at once.

"Good gracious, Bab," said my aunt testily, "you're more tiresome than the doctor! Be quiet, for goodness' sake, and don't make your eyes red."

"Aye, to be sure, Miss Barbara, don't you see that your conduct is neither agreeable nor well-timed?" chuckled the doctor, rubbing his hands. "Don't you know that sentiment is misplaced, and that your aunt wants her breakfast? You *do* want your breakfast, don't you, Mrs. S.? You are

experiencing a return of appetite, are you not, Mrs. S.?"

My aunt reluctantly conceded the point, and Dr. Topham rang the bell, and ordered a supply of tea and toast immediately.

"I tell you what it is, ma'am," he said, "those thirteen hours of sleep have been the salvation of you. All that you now want is nutriment—beef-tea, jellies, port wine, tonics, and all the good things we can think of; and if you are not strong and well in three weeks from this, I'll lose my head."

"No great loss, either," observed my aunt, politely.

"You flatter me."

"But of one thing, Topham," she continued, breaking her toast into the cup which I was holding, "I may as well warn you at once. I take no more of your poison."

"Poison!" echoed the doctor, aghast.

"Aye, poison. I've had enough of it—too much, I dare say; but if so, I forgive you. At all events, I'll not touch another drop of it; and if you send me any more, I'll make you drink it."

"Mrs. Sandyshaft," began the doctor, "you are the most unreasonable, and the most . . ."

"Topham," interposed my aunt, "hold your tongue. If you were to talk till midnight it

would make no difference. Bab, my dear, you don't look nearly so old this morning."

"My dear aunt," I replied, "that is because I am so happy. Yesterday, you know, I was both very tired, and very anxious—and besides I, also, am only just recovering from an illness."

She looked at me tenderly, and patted my cheek, just as she used to pat it when she was pleased with me, years ago.

"Poor Bab!" she said. "Poor little Bab! What has been the matter with you? Over study?"

"No—home-sickness, I think. I pined to come back to England again, and fell ill."

"Aye—true. They sent you to some foreign school, did they not? Yes, yes. I remember. I wrote to you, and your father sent me back my letter. He would not tell me where you were, Bab, and he would not send my letter to you. I wonder he has allowed you to come to me at all; but I suppose he thought I was dying, and it couldn't matter!"

"Oh, my dear aunt, did you really write to me?"

"Write to you, child! Aye, to be sure I did—and, after you were gone, would have given all I possessed to get you back again. Not that I ever

confessed so much, however! No—I was too proud to do that. Mercy on us, what fools we all are!"

"And I who thought you had forgotten me! I who was also too proud to—to . . . I shall never forgive myself!"

My aunt, who had all this time been progressing with her tea and toast in the most matter-of-fact manner, dealt me a smart blow with the spoon, and bade me hold my peace.

"Here you are," said she, "and that's enough. Don't let us have any whimpering about it. Now tell me, were you happy at the outlandish place they sent you to? And did they treat you kindly when you were ill? And did you learn anything worth knowing, besides their gibberish? Come, you have plenty of news for me, Bab."

"All of which must for the present be reserved," interposed the doctor. "Mrs. S., I am not going to let you talk yourself into a relapse of the fever. Miss Barbara, I forbid everything like news. Suppose that you and I take a turn in the garden together, while your aunt rests from the fatigue of this last half-hour?"

Saying which, and despite my aunt's remonstrances, he drew my arm through his, and led me from the room. In the parlour below, we found Hugh waiting. He had come round quietly by

the back-way, and, true to his promise, was in time for breakfast.

"Well, little wife!" said he. "Well, doctor, what news of your patient?"

"The best—the best in the world," replied Dr. Topham, joyfully. "A re-action has taken place, and the danger is past. I believe we must thank Mrs. Farquhar for some share in this result."

My husband smiled, and drew me fondly to his side.

"I have more than once found her to be the best of physicians," he said.

"Well, last night she surpassed herself, for she sent Mrs. Sandyshaft to sleep for thirteen consecutive hours. But you, by the by, look as if you had scarcely slept at all."

"I?" said Hugh, with some embarrassment. "Oh, I am right enough. I sat up late with my steward, looking through the accounts."

"Very foolish, very foolish, indeed!" said Dr. Topham. "What business has an independent man to work by night, when every hour of the day is at his disposal? Barbara, my dear, you must not let your husband do these inconsiderate things. See how haggard and ill he looks to-day!"

"Nonsense, doctor, I tell you I am well enough," exclaimed Hugh, impatiently. "I do not habitually sit up beyond midnight, but last night. . . ."

"Last night you had no one to call you to order, eh?" suggested the doctor. "Well, well, we must bind you over to keep good hours for some few nights yet to come—that is, if you will spare us our physician till the patient is out of all danger?"

"Nay, for how long will that be?"

"Four or five days, at the most."

"Four or five days!" repeated my husband. "Steal my little Barbara from me for four or five days—why, I shall be lost without her!"

But though he sighed as he said this, and played reluctantly with my hair, a strange, improbable notion flashed across my mind. Could it be a relief to him that I must stay for some days longer at Stoneycroft Hall?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST NIGHT AT BROOMHILL.

Hamlet.— Do you see nothing there?
Queen.—Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.
SHAKESPEARE.

"WELL, Bab, what's done can't be undone," observed my aunt, "and marriages, they say, are made in heaven—though, for my part, I believe they are much oftener concocted in t'other place. I suppose we must just try to make the best of it."

"Try to make the best of it!" I repeated. "Why, my dear aunt, there is no effort needed. I am perfectly happy."

My aunt shook her head, ominously.

"Poor child—poor little Bab!" said she. "So young! Such a tender, foolish, inexperienced baby! Oh, dear! oh, dear! She ought to be at

school now. Farquhar of Broomhill, indeed! A man old enough to be her father . . ."

"I beg your pardon, aunt," I interposed, somewhat warmly. "Hugh is only thirty-four, and, for freshness of feeling, might be ten years younger."

"Freshness of fiddledeedee!" said my aunt. "What freshness of feeling can any man retain, after knocking about the world for ten or fifteen years? Why, child, he is the most unsettled, uncivilised, uncertain of God's creatures! He'll be taking you here, and there, and everywhere all your life long, just as the fancy strikes him; and as to a quiet life and a happy home, you'll never know what they are for six months together. I confess to you, Bab, that I'm disappointed. I thought to have had you back, and to have kept you with me for as few, or as many, years as I may have to live; and now I find you whipped off by a fellow who may take you next week to the antipodes, for aught that I can say or do to prevent it! It's aggravating, Bab."

"But, my dear aunt, I have already explained this to you, and told you that I now hope to settle permanently at Broomhill. What more can you desire than to have me always near you, and united to the man whom I love best in the world —whom I have loved all my life?"

"You might as well have fallen in love with the weathercock on my barn!" exclaimed my aunt. "But it was my own fault ever to have made his acquaintance—I, who hated the very name of Farquhar! I, who would not have crossed his father's threshold for a hundred pounds!"

"But you liked him—you invited him—you visited him!"

"He amused me," said my aunt, tartly.

"And when he was ill, you nursed him!"

"I would have done the same for anyone else."

"But not in the same way. Nay, dear aunt, Hugh is my husband, and I love him—I respect him—I honour him. I know how brave and true he is. I know how superior he is to me in knowledge, and what deep springs of poetry lie hidden beneath the careless surface of his daily life. I read his noble nature, though you cannot read it; and I know how it was embittered by solitude and want of sympathy. Be just to him, I entreat you; and if you no longer feel the friendship you once felt for him, for my sake, at least, respect the goodness and greatness that is in him!"

My aunt shrugged her shoulders, aud looked as though she pitied me for my infatuation.

"He must do something great before I acknowledge his greatness," she said; "and as for respect . . ."

"And as for respect," I interposed hastily, "I am not aware that my husband has ever forfeited his just claim to it from all who know him. You seem to forget, aunt, that he is, by birth and fortune, a gentleman."

"Oh, I forget nothing—not even his fortune, which he squanders abroad, like an Englishman and a fool!"

I remained silent.

"Nor his talents, which rust for want of use—nor the idle life that he has led all these years, dangling about picture-galleries, writing his name upon pyramids, and shooting monkeys in American forests! Mercy on us! what sort of a career do you call that for a county gentleman? I tell you, Bab, it's neither poetry, nor philosophy, nor want of sympathy that sends a man vagabondizing all over the world in that mad way—it's the mere love of excitement, and nothing else. The same shallow, vulgar, fatal passion that drives a poor man to the ale-house, and a rogue to the gallows—take my word for it."

What language to stand by and hear from her lips! I dared not trust my tongue to answer, lest it should utter something unforgiveable; but I turned away, and, standing in the deep embrasure of the window, shed tears of mortification. It was the fourth day of my stay at Stoneycroft Hall, and

my aunt was so far recovered that Hugh had arranged to come for me in the evening, and take me home to Broomhill. In the meantime I had told her the story of my love and my happiness, and she, in return, had spoken words too bitter, ah! surely too bitter to carry with them any leaven of the truth! And yet . . . what if his love for me *were* only to last till the excitement had burnt out, and were then to crumble away into dust and ashes? What if he *were* to grow weary and restless, and go back some day to his old wild life, and leave me weeping? The thought was too terrible. I dared not dwell upon it."

Alas! life knows no darker moment than that which first disturbs our faith in the fair romance of the future. Happily our incredulity is brief. The shock is too rude, and the arrow, like vaulting ambition, "o'erleaps itself" and flies beyond the mark. The idol of a woman's love is not so easily hurled from its pedestal. For my part, I believed only the more implicitly for having wavered, however momentarily, in my faith; and so lifted my idol from the dust, and kissed it reverently, and fell down again, and worshipped it.

It was but the revolution of a few moments; yet in those few moments I passed through a whole cycle of feeling, and became, by some strange alchemy of passion, other than I was before. What

had happened to me? I could scarcely tell. I only felt calmer, better, more worthy of myself and him. Ten years seemed to have flown suddenly over my head, and to have brought with them clearer convictions of duty, and deeper resources of self-help. My pride as a woman, my dignity as a wife, were developed, as it were, spontaneously, from this ordeal of doubt; and I felt that, happen what might, no deed or thought of mine should ever seem to sanction the injustice of others. Whose tongue so fit as mine to "smooth his name," though all the world should mangle it? Whose faith so necessary, whose respect so justly due to him? In less time than it has taken to write, these things succeeded each other in my mind, and determined my line of conduct for the future.

I put back the curtain behind which I had concealed my trouble, and returned quietly to my seat beside the bed.

"Aunt," I said, "for our mutual peace and love, let this conversation never be renewed. It is my place to silence those who censure my husband—not to defend him, for he needs no defence. His honour and mine, his interests and mine, are one; and who wrongs him, injures me. He will be here in a few moments to take me home for the first time since our marriage—have you nothing

kinder, nothing more just, to say to me before I go?"

My aunt stirred uneasily, but remained obstinately silent. I heard a carriage draw up at the gate.

"He is here," I said, earnestly, "He is here, and I must leave you—but not thus? Surely, not thus?"

My aunt opened her lips, as if to speak, and shut them again quickly, like a trap. I moved towards the door.

"Good-bye, then," I faltered.

"Bab," said my aunt, "come back."

I was at her bedside almost before the words were out of her mouth.

"I am an old woman," she continued, turning her face from me, "and no wiser, I dare say, than my neighbours. As for my politeness, or my good temper, the less we say about either, the better. Remember, child, that I am disappointed. I didn't want you to marry, and I didn't dream you'd marry for many a year to come; and it aggravates me that you should have chosen a man who never lives on his acres, and who may carry you off to Timbuctoo any day, at a moment's notice."

"My dear aunt," I began; but she stopped me with a gesture.

"Don't interrupt me, Bab. I hate it. Now,

listen to me. I dare say I said some harsh things just now—if I did, forget them. I dare say they were true enough, too; but that's not to the purpose. You may think 'em all false, if you please; and as to this precious husband of yours, why, I dare say he's not so bad as he seems. If he only makes you happy, Bab, I'll forgive him."

"If he did not," thought I to myself, "I would never tell *you*, Aunt Sandyshaft!"

"But you must make him live in England," she continued. "Be sure you make him live in England."

"Nay," said I, "of that you may be certain. Is it not my own dearest wish?"

"Aye, then you may go. Stay, though—one may as well be civil, even to the devil. Let him come up and see me."

"Who, aunt? The devil?"

"Nonsense, child! Your husband, of course. Who else?"

It was an ungracious invitation; but I worded it more pleasantly, and brought him to her room.

"So! Hugh Farquhar," she began, before he had time to open his lips, "what business had you to steal my Bab? What have you to say for yourself? What have you been after, all these years? Mischief, I'll be bound! There, I know what you are going to say, by the expression of your face—

that is, by what's visible of it. Why, man, you look like a Skye terrier, with all that hair about you!"

Hugh laughed, good-naturedly, and took a seat by the bedside.

"Complimentary as ever, I see, Mrs. Sandyshaft," he said. "I am glad, however, to find you well enough to be sarcastic. You are looking better than I expected."

"Looking, indeed! I look like a lemon, and feel as sour. What right had you to marry my Bab?"

"No right at all, my dear Madam; but great good fortune," replied Hugh.

"That's very true," said my aunt, "and good luck always falls to those who don't deserve it. She's too good for you, by half, Hugh Farquhar; and that's the long and short of it. Come, tell me what you've been doing all these years? Buying more pictures at six thousand pounds apiece, eh?"

"On the contrary, I have been improving myself in arithmetic and self-denial, and learning how to balance my love of art against my banking book."

"Humph! so much the better. And where have you been? What have you been doing?"

"Since when, Mrs. Sandyshaft?"

"Why, since you left England six or seven years ago, after so nearly making a fool of yourself with Flora Bayham."

A dark flush mounted to the very roots of his hair; but he repressed the rising answer, and said—

"I have been to more places, and had more adventures than you would care to hear, or I to tell. I have shot buffaloes in North America, and tigers in the Indian jungle—I have smoked my pipe in a Nile boat, and my paper cigarette in a Mexican wineshop—I have thrown my harpoon at a whale; caught turtles at Ascension; left my visiting card on the peak of Teneriffe; and supped with Mr. Layard among the ruins of Nineveh. *Enfin*, I have packed away my 'sandal shoon and scallop shell;' and taken unto myself the responsibility of a wife. Will that do, Mrs. Sandyshaft; or shall I go into details of latitude and longitude, ships' names, private expenses, and so forth?"

"No, thank you. I had much rather hear you say that you've done with all such freaks for the future. Travelling, without any useful object in view, is folly, sir, and nothing short of it."

"Travelling, like love, my dear madam, is the folly of the wise man, and the wisdom of the fool. Now I am modest enough to fancy that it has been my wisdom."

"Well, supposing that I admit this proposition, can you tell me what have been the fruits of your wisdom? What you have gained by all this gadding about, and what you have learned?"

"Unquestionably. I have acquired an admirable judgment of old masters and cigars—learned the art of playing the castanets, and throwing the lasso—studied every variety of war-whoop, under the best native teachers; and practised the art of fishing by night with a lamp and a knife, till I defy the most practised mountaineer to excel me."

"Meritorious and useful in the highest degree!" said my aunt. "Pray, is that all?"

"Not half," replied Hugh, determined not to observe the growing bitterness with which she listened. "I can interpret a Turkish love-letter, and frame an answer in return. I can eat rice with chop-sticks, and dine off *caviare* without holding my nose. I can dance like a dervish, fling a lance like a Bedouin, cook Chowder like a Yankee . . . ."

"Enough," interrupted my aunt. "Don't fatigue yourself with more examples. In a wigwam, or a desert, I have no doubt that you are a delightful companion; but here, I fear, your accomplishments will not meet with the respect they merit. The conversation and habits of our English gentry will be intolerable to you, after the wit and refinement of your Chocktaw and Tatar friends."

"True; but when I weary of civilized society, I can take refuge in yours."

My aunt smiled grimly. Like a good fencer, she could applaud her adversary's "very palpable hit," and like him the better for it.

"Done," said she. "My barbarity will always be at your service. In the meantime, I recommend you to let your Asiatic talents lie dormant for the present. Don't be throwing the lasso at your neighbour's cows, or the javelin at my pigs, or you may find the sport expensive. Now, good night to you."

Thus abruptly dismissed, we took our leave, and as I kissed her, she whispered, "Come back to-morrow, Bab. I'm a cross old woman, but I can't do without you."

An old-fashioned yellow chariot was waiting at the gate, with lighted lamps and a pair of patient horses. The coachman started from a doze at the sound of our voices. He was a very old man, and touched his hat to me as I got in; then feebly gathered up the reins, and drove us at a foot pace down the hill. Hugh flung himself impatiently into a corner, and found fault with everything.

"A delightful mode of progression, certainly!" he exclaimed. "It carries us back, Barbarina, to the time of our forefathers, and proves the possibility of

going from London to York in four days by the 'Flying Coach.' Did you ever see such a musty old vehicle? It was my father's coach, built for him on his marriage. Faugh! it smells of cobwebs! I unearthed it yesterday, and had it furbished up for your ladyship's state progress. That relic of antiquity on the driving-box was my father's coachman, and my grandfather's also, I believe. I had to unearth him as well; for he has been lodge-keeper these last fifteen years. As for the horses, they are as old and out of date as the rest of the equipage, and have been doing duty at the plough this many a year. *Corpo di Bacco!* if we stay in this place, what a revolution I'll effect! I'll build a billiard-room, and a private theatre. I'll keep hunters, and a French cook, and teach you to follow the hounds! How will you like that, my little wife?"

I shook my head. His restless gaiety jarred upon me, and my heart was full of a very different future.

"I should not like it at all, Hugh," I said, sadly. "I had far rather transfer to Broomhill the quiet life we led in Italy—that happy life of books and art, that suits us both so well."

"Tush, child!" he answered, lightly, "the *dolce far niente* needs a Southern sky. In this bitter North, men are driven to rough stimulants, and need something more than books to stir the cur-

rents of their blood. For my part, when in England, I almost lived in the saddle. By the by, you were asking about Satan!"

"Satan," I repeated, vaguely; thinking less of the question than of what had gone before. "What of him?"

"He's dead, poor brute. A good horse he was, too—pure Arabian."

"But surely," I said, anxiously, "surely you do not mean to tell me that you can never again be satisfied to share my quiet pleasures, simply because this is Broomhill, and not Rome. Oh, Hugh, when I think how perfectly happy we have been up to this moment . . . ."

He laid his hand, laughingly, upon my mouth.

"*Silenzio, Barbarina mia!*" he exclaimed. "We have been happy—we are happy—we may, can, shall, and will be happy, *etcœtera, etcœtera, etcœtera!* Now look out, and tell me if you know where we are!"

Where indeed! Under the arching branches of the dear old avenue—passing the great gnarled oaks, the centenarians of the park—approaching the cedars, and the Tudor gateway, and all the hallowed places photographed for years upon my memory! It was dark, and the moon had not yet risen; but I could trace their outlines through the gloom. We turned the western angle, and passed under the archway.

"One word, Hugh," I faltered, "one word before we reach the door. Is it *no* pleasure to you to bring me home to your own ancestral roof? Absolutely none?"

"My dear love," he said, hastily, "why revive that vexed question at such a moment? Here we are, and we must make the best of it. Stay, I will get out first."

Make the best of it! For the second time that afternoon I heard those unsatisfying words. Was there, indeed, "something rotten" underlying every condition of my life, that I must always be warned to "make the best of it?" What was wrong? What was wanting? Whence this vague trouble, the very source of which I knew not?

Discouraged and oppressed, I crossed the threshold of my husband's home, and passed the servants in the hall without even observing that they were assembled there in my honour. Tippoo preceded us with a pair of wax-lights, and we followed in silence. I scarcely noticed to which part of the building he was leading us. I scarcely remarked through what a number of corridors, and up how many flights of stairs we had to go. Not till he stopped before a gothic door, and drew aside the curtain by which it was shrouded within, did I even guess that we were to dine that first evening

in the turret-chamber. Ah, the snug, secluded, pleasant turret-chamber! There it was, just as I remembered it, with its books, and its busts, and its swinging lamp, and all its graceful accessories —aye, even to the green and golden hookah in the corner, and the table glittering with glass and silver. Seeing all this brought back, as it were, suddenly, out of the past, I uttered an exclamation of joyful recognition.

"That's well," said Hugh. "I fancied I should please you by bringing you to my old snuggery, where we dined together the day of our first acquaintance. Ah, wifie, do you remember how frightened you were when I came behind you at the library window?"

"Ah, husband, do you remember how you forgot all about me, though I was sitting in that corner all the time; and how you asked Tippoo why he laid a second cover?"

"Nay, did I? I had forgotten it. I recollect, however, that you had the bad taste not to like my dinner, and ate scarcely anything."

"And the still worse taste to be disappointed in the Paul Veronese! Tell me, am I yet forgiven that offence?"

Hugh laughed, and shook his head.

"Not yet," said he. "Not till you have seen it again with your own, dear, sensible artist-eyes,

and performed a heavy penance of admiration. But see, here comes our dinner. Tippoo, desire Mrs. Fairhead to send us up a bottle of the old Romanée, and a pint of the special Tokay with the yellow seal. Come, wife, we will feast to-night, and make "high holiday." What say you? Shall we dismiss that awkward supernumerary in the white cravat, and keep only Tippoo to wait upon us?"

"Only Tippoo, of course."

So the servant was dismissed, and Tippoo waited on us as noiselessly and dexterously as the slave of the lamp. We jested, we laughed, we drank toasts, and were as gay as children out of school. Everything that evening seemed delicious, and life all rose-colour. My husband exerted himself solely to amuse me; and if it did once or twice occur to me that he made an effort to be gay—that if he ceased one moment to make that effort, he would relapse into the sullen gloom which had of late become his frequent mood—I banished it, and flattered myself that I was mistaken.

After dinner we sat long over our coffee and dessert, and talked of Italy, and Rome, and our wanderings in the Alps; and looked through a portfolio of rare etchings that he had brought from the library to show me; and planned how we would go to Venice and the Tyrol some day, and

perhaps as far as Constantinople. Ah, what a child I was, and how little made me happy!

Thus the pleasant evening passed away, and it was almost midnight before we went to bed. This brings me to something which I must tell in its place—something so strange, so uncomfortable, that merely to recall it brings back the shuddering disquiet of the moment when it happened.

The house was very still. As I have already said, it was just midnight, and the servants, used to country hours, had long since retired. Tippoo waited, as usual, in my husband's dressing-room, ready, if we rang, to attend upon us. To-night, however, being still in merry conversation, we did not care to summon him; so Hugh took the lamp himself, and led the way. It was a very powerful lamp, with a shade over it, which concentrated the light into one intense circle, and left all beyond in darkness. As we went out into the corridor, suffering the door of the turret-chamber to swing back with a reverberating echo, I laughingly compared the effect of this light to that of a lanthorn in a fine Rembrandt etching of the Nativity, which we had been admiring a little while ago. Whereupon Hugh, profanely humouring the idea, fell into the majestic attitude of the chief shepherd, and intoned the first verse of a drawling Christmas carol. It was

a boyish trick, boyishly done—one of those foolish jests that arise when two people are in high spirits, and no third stands by to keep them within the bounds of common sense.

At that very moment, I saw something darker than the darkness glide down the gloom of the corridor. I looked at Hugh; but he had evidently seen nothing.

"Hush!" I said shudderingly. "Don't wake the echoes of these great wandering passages, at such an hour of the night. Let us go on. I shall never dare to walk about this house alone, after dark!"

"Why not, child? We have nothing so vulgar as a ghost in the family. But you tremble!"

I muttered something about the cold, and he put his arm round me, quickening his pace the while. We were now at the head of the great well-staircase, and again, if I were not strangely mocked by my own terrors, I saw the dark shadow stealing swiftly down before us. To keep silent longer was impossible.

"What's that?" I cried, clinging to the balustrade, and pointing downwards with unsteady finger. "What's that? See!—see where it goes!"

He snatched the shade from the lamp, and held it at arm's length over the deep shaft.

"Where what goes?" said he, shifting the light

so that it fell from flight to flight, and from side to side, down all the windings of the stairs, till lost in the lower darkness. "I see nothing."

"Nor I—and yet I am positive . . . just now . . . a figure . . . it could not have been fancy!"

"It was fancy, then, and nothing else. Why, Barbarina, I never dreamt that you were such a coward. You shake from head to foot!"

So I did, and was too thoroughly frightened to be even ashamed of my terror. I only clung to his arm, and implored him to hurry on; and, when we came to our own bright, snug bed-room, with its cheerful lights and crackling wood-fire, bolted the door, and sank into an easy chair with a deeper sense of relief than I had ever known in my life before.

Was it fancy—fancy and nothing else?

Revolving that question in my mind, I lay awake long after Hugh had fallen into his first deep sleep; and all through the night, at intervals that seemed, in my restlessness, to follow each other with scarcely a moment's intermission, started from uneasy dreams to listen, and wonder, and ask myself the same thing over and over again.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SHAKESPEARE FOLIO OF 1623.

"Out, damned spot!"—*Macbeth.*

"FEAR is a night-bird, and vanishes, like the owl, at sunrise. Come, wife, are you not ashamed to have been such a coward?"

Seeing the bright day pouring in at every window and lighting up the brown and amber foliage of the sere woodlands round about, I was thoroughly ashamed, and owned it freely.

"As for apparitions," continued Hugh, alternately sipping his coffee and examining the lock of his gun, "we decline to harbour any such spiritual rogues and vagabonds. We leave them to the tender mercies of Messrs. Dumas and Co., to be dealt with according to the law of public taste. Broomhill, my child, abounds in game—

not ghosts. Now it is my firm belief that I shall shoot a dozen pheasants before dinner."

"Not till you have first made the tour of the house with me, Hugh—and I am longing to explore every nook and corner of it."

"Nonsense, love; the house will not run away. You are mistress here, and can see it at any time."

"And because I am mistress, I mean to see it at once. There, lay your gun aside. Grant the pheasants a reprieve, for my sake, and indulge me this one morning with your company."

"And why will not Mrs. Fairhead do as well? She knows the house and its history far better than I."

"Mrs. Fairhead may come too; but I cannot do without you."

"*Quatre-vingt mille tonnerres!* What *do* you want with me?"

"A hundred things. I want you to show me the Paul Veronese; and the ball-room where the accident happened; and the library. And I want you to introduce me to your ancestors in the matted gallery . . . ."

"I hate my ancestors," said Hugh, irreverently.

"And I want you to tell me the history of all that old armour in the west wing, and . . . ."

"Then it is quite evident, Barbarina, that your wants far exceed my resources. Come, let us compound the matter. I will go with you through the library and the matted gallery, and you must be content with Mrs. Fairhead's company the rest of the way. She is a wonderful old lady, I assure you, and has all the genealogy of the Farquhar family at her fingers' ends. She will show you everything, and explain everything, from the plate-closet to the picture-gallery, with the accuracy and elegance of a catalogue *raisonnée*. Bid her discourse, and she will enchant thine ear for hours on the fashion of a morion, the tone of a Murillo, or the pattern of a Majolica service. Archæology is not too heavy, nor court scandal too light for her. She will relate all about the Battle of Worcester better than the Boscobel tracts, and tell sad stories of the freaks of kings, when de Querouailles became Duchesses in the land, and orange-girls rode in coaches to Whitehall. As for architecture . . ."

I put my fingers in my ears, and refused to hear another word.

"Enough of Mrs. Fairhead's accomplishments!" I cried, impatiently. "Let us have her up in person, and begin at once."

We rang for her, and she came—a fair, portly, sedate old lady, in an ample grey silk dress, with a small key-basket in her hand, and in the key-

basket a book with a red cover. She curtsied profoundly, first to me, then to Hugh, and then to me again.

"We want you—that is, your mistress wants you, to take her over the house, Mrs. Fairhead," said Hugh.

"I concluded as much, sir," replied Mrs. Fairhead, with a glance at the key-basket, and a side-glance of curiosity at myself.

"We came so late last night, Mrs. Fairhead," continued Hugh, "that I forgot to present you to my wife. Barbara, in Mrs. Fairhead you see an old and attached servant of the family. One whom we cannot value too highly."

Mrs. Fairhead, with the gravity of a Mahommedan at his genuflexions, curtsied three times, as before.

"When your lamented father brought home *his* lady, sir," she said, "it was in a carriage and four, to the ringing of the church-bells; and we servants, fourteen of us, received our mistress in the hall, and very happy and proud we were. But now, sir, the house is more than half shut up, and we had so little time to prepare, and your establishment for the last twelve or fifteen years has been so small, that . . . ."

Hugh stopped her with a quiet gesture.

"Mrs. Farquhar knows all that," he observed,

"and will make every allowance for the neglected state of the place. My dear, you understand that we are only on a peace footing here, with all our cannon rusted, and our soldiers out at elbow. Shall we begin with the matted gallery?"

We began with the matted gallery, and Mrs. Fairhead led the way. It was a noble room, oak-panelled, lit from the left by a long line of windows, and diminishing to a fine perspective. On the side opposite the windows hung a double row of paintings, chiefly family portraits, with a sprinkling of old masters; and between each window stood a bracket with a bust on it. At the farther end, like a note of admiration at the close of a fine sentence, stood a pedestal, and a superb Roman vase of dark green marble.

"This gallery, ma'am," began Mrs. Fairhead, "occupies the upper floor of the Tudor wing. The library occupies the ground-floor, immediately beneath our feet. This wing was built in the year fifteen hundred and . . . ."

"Spare us the dates, my good Mrs. Fairhead," interrupted Hugh, "and tell us about the pictures. Who is this scarecrow in the brown cloak and muffin cap?"

Mrs. Fairhead looked shocked, and said, with increased gravity:—

"That, sir, is a portrait of Marmaduke, fourth

Baron de Grey, whose second daughter, the Lady Mary, married John Farquhar of Broomhill, the head of this house, in the year fifteen hundred and eleven. That is John Farquhar's portrait above, painted by the celebrated Holbein. He appears in a fancy costume, supposed to be the dress worn by him at a court-entertainment given in honour of King Henry the Eighth's marriage with Queen Anne Boleyn."

"No more painted by Holbein than by me!" said Hugh, between his teeth. "Well, Mrs. Fairhead, go on. Number seven, in a ruff. Who is number seven?"

"Number seven, sir," replied the housekeeper, "represents Madam Eleanor Farquhar, wife of Richard Farquhar of Broomhill, eldest son and heir of John Farquhar, just mentioned. Madam Eleanor was the daughter of a wealthy London merchant, and brought a considerable fortune to her husband. She was a great beauty, and her portrait is considered to be very curious."

"And so it is—for a beauty! Well, Mrs. Fairhead, number nine?"

"The eldest son of Madam Eleanor, and Richard Farquhar, sir. This young gentleman went out with the Earl of Essex's expedition in fifteen hundred and seventy-six, and was killed at Cadiz. The next three portraits represent the

next three generations—Edward Farquhar, high sheriff of the county under James the First; William Farquhar, his eldest son and successor; and Richard Farquhar, eldest son of the last, who commanded a squadron at the battle of Naseby, and died in London of the great plague, in the year sixteen hundred and sixty-five."

"Aye, I remember. One of the few men who, having succoured the exile, were remembered by the king. He got a commission in the Coldstream Guards, then first levied. What business had he to be painted thus? He ought to have left us the portrait of his uniform, if only to give some flavour to his own! Go on, Mrs. Fairhead."

"Portrait of the celebrated Inigo Jones," began the housekeeper, "by whom the elegant façade of the east wing was designed in the year sixteen hundred and nineteen, and . . . ."

"And the effect of the whole building destroyed!" interposed Hugh, shaking his fist at the portrait. "You mischievous, meretricious old scoundrel, I have a great mind to make a bonfire of you, next fifth of November!"

Mrs. Fairhead turned pale with horror.

"What, sir!" she exclaimed, "burn a painting that has been in your family for generations?"

"The more shame to my forefathers, for not

sparing me the trouble. And this jovial-looking warrior in the blue and buff livery?"

"The portrait of Lionel Farquhar, Esquire, who was made a major in the Suffolk militia in the year 1759; which was the first year of the militia being raised in all parts of England, in consequence of the expected invasion of the French under King Lewis the Fifteenth."

"Oh, such marchings and counter-marchings, from Brentford to Ealing, from Ealing to Acton, from Acton to Uxbridge," laughed Hugh. "Ah, Barbarina, I quote Major Sturgeon; a hero with whom you are not acquainted. Well, Mrs. Fairhead, number fourteen?"

"Lionel Farquhar, Esquire, junior, son of the last, and Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, under Admiral Lord Rodney," pursued the housekeeper, keeping steadily on, catalogue in hand, and evidently scandalised by our levity. "Number fifteen; the infant family of Lionel Farquhar, junior, with the family mansion in the background. The little boy in the blue gown is Alexander, the eldest son and heir, whose portrait you observe above, painted some years later by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Alexander Farquhar, Esquire, was the first of the name who represented the Borough of Ipswich in the House of Commons."

"Patriotic grandpapa Alexander!" ejaculated

Hugh. "Shall I follow his example, wife, and present myself as a candidate at the next general election?"

"If your question were put seriously, I should ask time to consider, Hugh, before replying."

"Number seventeen, as I can tell without Mrs. Fairhead's help, is by Quintin Matsys—one of the most curious and valuable paintings in the house," said he, without seeming to have heard me. "It is a variation on his favourite 'miser' subject, one specimen of which is at Windsor, and the other at Antwerp. Look at that fellow's eager eyes and long greedy fingers. The picture is a sermon on avarice."

"But where," I asked, "is the Paul Veronese?"

"In the dining-room, I believe."

"And who is this in the blue coat, and white neck-cloth? What a candid, benevolent face!"

"That," said Hugh, a shade of sudden anguish passing over his face, "is my father—my dear father, from whom I parted in health, and hope, and joy, as I went out upon my first travels; and whom I never saw in life again."

I looked at the portrait with earnest interest, trying to trace in it some resemblance to my husband.

"You are not like him, Hugh," I said.

"Only my eyes are like his, and the vein upon

my left temple. All the Farquhars have that vein upon the temple—invisible when they are calm, but starting into angry relief in moments of passion. But we have come to the end of the portraits."

"Your own should be added now," I suggested.

"Pshaw! I am too ugly."

"Ugly, *sposo mio!*"

"Aye; and too old."

"What folly! I believe you only want to be complimented on your youth and beauty. But, indeed, Hugh, I should like to see your portrait carrying on the line of Farquhars."

"Then we will both be painted, *carina*, when we next go up to London for a few weeks. You are looking at that vase. It is veritable *verde antico*. I bought it in Rome, on my first visit to Italy, and had shipped it home as a present to my father, only a few days before I received intelligence of his death. But these are sad memories. Mrs. Fairhead, we will follow you to the library."

His gaiety was gone, and we left the gallery in a mood very unlike that in which we had entered it. Mrs. Fairhead preceded us down the great stone stair-case, and paused to direct my attention to a large battle-picture in the hall.

"That subject ought to interest you, Barbara," observed Hugh, seeing me turn away with scarcely

a glance at the huge dull canvas. "It represents the siege of Nimeguen."

"Why should I be interested in the siege of Nimeguen?" asked I. "I am no admirer of battle-pieces."

"Because it was at Nimeguen that your handsome ancestor first distinguished himself, and Turenne predicted his future greatness. You must know, Mrs. Fairhead," added Hugh, turning to the housekeeper, "that my wife is descended from the famous Duke of Marlborough."

Mrs. Fairhead dropped a profound courtesy.

"The same who won so many battles against the French, in the reign of Queen Anne, and whose portrait, in miniature, hangs in my father's study."

Mrs. Fairhead curtsied lower than before, and declared she could see a likeness to Madam about the forehead and eyes. These facts evidently went far to raise me in her good opinion.

"And now, Barbarina, for the room of which I am proudest in this old house—the library accumulated by my forefathers from generation to generation during a term of nearly four hundred years. We have here a manuscript Horace of the seventh century; a genuine copy of the Shakespeare folio of 1623; a first edition of Chaucer; a volume of unpublished manuscript notes and extracts of Jeremy Taylor; and I know not . . . .

what's the matter with the lock, Mrs. Fairhead?"

"Nothing, sir, to my knowledge," replied the housekeeper, turning the key with some little difficulty. "It opened quite easily this morning."

She and Hugh stayed back a moment, examining the lock, while I pushed the door open, and went in.

To my surprise, I heard another door, at that instant, closed sharply and suddenly at the farther end of the library. It was a very long, narrow room, corresponding exactly in shape and length to the matted gallery above, and lined with books from end to end. I looked, naturally, for the door that I had heard; but there was no second door visible. Windows there were all along one side, like the windows in the picture gallery; but not one that opened to the ground, and could therefore be used as a means of entrance or exit. And yet I was confident that my ears had not deceived me. I heard the creak of the hinge and the click of the lock as distinctly as I now heard Hugh walk up to my side, and say—

"A goodly show of literature, is it not, *petite?*"

"Goodly, indeed. It makes me feel like a traveller in sight of a strange country."

"Or a discoverer about to journey round the great world of books, in search of unknown conti-

nents. Ah, wifie, what exploring voyages we will make together—what strange specimens of 'barbaric gold and pearl,' scraps of crabbed verse, quaint rhyme, and flowery rhetoric, we will bring back, in testimony of our wanderings!"

"Is there no other entrance to this library?" I asked, suddenly.

"My child, what an absurd question! Don't your own eyes answer you? Why do you ask?"

"Because I am confident I heard a door closed as I came in."

"In one of the upper rooms, no doubt," said my husband, turning abruptly aside and searching along the nearest shelves. "Mrs. Fairhead, do you know where that last lot of foreign books has been placed?"

"The large case, sir, that you sent from Germany?"

"Yes. I desired they should be bound before they were placed upon the shelves."

"I believe they are between two of the windows, sir, lower down," replied Mrs. Fairhead, "but I'm sure I don't know which. By referring to the catalogue . . . ."

"Yes, yes, of course," interrupted Hugh; "but I am sure to come to them presently. See, Barbara, here is the 1623 Shakespeare—a volume

which dignifies a library like a patent of nobility."

"A grand folio, truly; and, I suppose, very valuable?"

"I gave three hundred pounds for it, and never spent my money with more hearty satisfaction. Faulty as the text is, if you once begin to read Shakespeare out of these pages, you will never tolerate him in any other edition. You cannot think what a flavour of antiquity this old type gives to Macbeth and King Lear."

"But—but, Hugh . . . ."

"Yes, my darling?"

"I know you will think me very foolish; but I do assure you that sound was too distinct to be in any upper floor. It came, apparently, from the farther end of this very room, and . . . ."

"And was, no doubt, the work of that ghost which you fancied you saw on the stairs last night! What say you to this, Mrs. Fairhead? Your mistress would have me believe the old place is haunted!"

Mrs. Fairhead smiled respectful incredulity.

"I have lived in it all my life, sir," said she, "and this is the first time *I* ever heard of such a thing."

"Fancied she saw a ghost last night on the great staircase," continued Hugh, speaking rapidly, "and declares she heard a supernatural door closed

in this very room, while you and I were examining that lock a moment ago."

But for the impossibility of such a thing, I could have believed that I detected a glance of intelligence between Mrs. Fairhead and her master. Anyhow, the smile vanished from the housekeeper's lips, and the colour mounted to her face.

"I—I am sure," stammered she, "if—if Madam . . . ."

"Mr. Farquhar only jests," I said, impatiently. "I have as little faith in ghosts, Mrs. Fairhead, as either himself or you; but I do believe that these old mansions have often secret doors and hiding places, the very existence of which is forgotten. Such a door there might have been in this room—nay, *may* be, and yet unknown to you. So simple a thing as the trick of a sliding panel might be accidentally discovered, any day, by a servant; and the sound I heard . . . . but, there, it is of no consequence. You know of no door, and perhaps there is none. Most likely, I was mistaken."

"Most likely and most certainly, Barbara," said Hugh, shrugging his shoulders. "Where every shelf is full, as you see here, the best contrived sliding panel that ever mediæval builder planned, would be of little service. And now let us have done with ghosts. Shall I put back the Shakespeare?"

"No, I should like to look through it for a few moments."

"Then I will place it on this table for you, while I find the manuscript Horace."

He placed it on the table—one of two, carved in oak and covered with green morocco, which stood at equal distances down the middle of the room—and I began turning over the yellow leaves with that reverent delight which is only known to the real book lover. As I did so, dwelling on the fantastic head and tail pieces, and spelling over the quaint address supposed to have been written by Ben Jonson, I saw with dismay that my finger left an ink mark on the page.

I looked at my hand, and found the stain yet damp upon it. How could this be? I had used no writing materials; written nothing; touched nothing on which there was writing this day! I anxiously closed the precious folio, and examined the cover; but the glossy old brown calf was dry and stainless. Puzzled, but relieved, I drew a chair to the table, and re-opened the volume. Suddenly, I felt the blood rush to my face, like a fiery tide.

I saw a large ink-drop on the green morocco, close against my arm.

My first impulse was to utter an exclamation; my second to suppress it, and try whether the drop

was really fresh, or whether the gloss had only dried upon it. I touched it, and the stain came off upon my finger, leaving a little half-dried circle outlined on the table. What mystery was this? There was an inkstand, it is true, upon each table; but what of that? The door was locked before we came in. There was no second door, and the room was empty. Empty? Was it empty? Was there no second door? Was Mrs. Fairhead absolutely certain that there was no second door? Was Hugh .... No, no! if mystery there was, *he* had no share in it. He was deceived as well as I; and Mrs. Fairhead ... I mistrusted Mrs. Fairhead. I remembered her embarrassment. I trembled, I knew not why, and bending low above the book, leaned my head upon my hand, and concealed my agitation as well as I could.

"See here, Barbarina," said my husband, cheerily, coming up from the lower end of the library with an armful of dusty volumes, "here are treasures for your delectation—the early Chaucer; a queer old Tasso, clasped and bound in vellum; a very curious illuminated Greek testament of .... but what is the matter? You look pale!"

"I do not feel very well, Hugh," I replied. "A slight faintness came over me just now, and ...."

"This room is too cold for you, my child," he interrupted, anxiously. "I ought to have remembered that we are in the first days of October, and have ordered the stove to be lighted before you came into this great desolate library. Let us go upstairs at once. I can bring the Shakespeare, if you wish it; and send one of the servants for these other books. Do you still feel faint?"

"Not nearly so faint as I did. A walk, I think, would do me good; and it is quite time that I went over to Stoneycroft, if I would not make my visit too brief."

"I fear those four days spent at Mrs. Sandyshaft's bedside have done you harm, my wifie," said Hugh, encircling my waist with his strong arm, and leading me tenderly away.

"Oh, it is not that, Hugh!"

"Nay, I am not so sure. I shall not let you stay long with her to-day. Remember, my little one, you have but lately recovered from illness yourself, and are too precious a jewel to be imperilled, though all the aunts in creation clamoured for your company."

"My poor aunt, Hugh, I tell you again, has nothing to do with it," I repeated, when we had reached our quiet upstairs room, and were alone again.

"What was it then?"

"If I tell you, you will laugh at me."

"By Jove, now, if it's anything more about your imaginary ghost. . . ."

I laid my hand upon his mouth.

"It's about no ghost," I said; "but an ink-drop."

"The ghost of an ink-drop?" laughed Hugh.

"No—a very material ink-drop, I am sorry to say," replied I; "for it has left a stain on the title page of your 1623 Shakespeare."

"Confound it! How did that happen?"

"Sit down quietly, and I will tell you; but first of all, understand that although I was the unlucky transferrer of the stain, it was through no fault of mine. I would not have injured your precious folio, husband, for the world."

And with this I told my story, with all my doubts, suspicions, and conclusions. When I had done, he laughed, patted me on the cheek, and told me I was a goose for my pains.

"But some one *must* have been in the room, Hugh," I persisted; "or how could the ink-drop have fallen on the table?"

"And some one *had* been in the room, no doubt—one of the housemaids, most probably. The place was dusted this morning, of course, before we went into it."

"But it was still wet, and . . . ."

"A large drop, such as you describe, *carina*, would take some time to dry in a room without a fire, this cool October morning."

"Then housemaids don't go into libraries to write."

"By no means certain, if the housemaid has a sweetheart; but it does not follow that she was writing. She may have set the inkstand roughly down, or have whisked her duster into it, or have spilt the ink in half a dozen ways, without using a pen for the purpose."

"And as for that sound that I heard, Hugh, I am as certain that it was not on an upper floor . . . ."

"As I am, that it was the work of your own fancy!" interrupted he. "Pshaw, my darling, it needs no sliding panels, no ghosts, no diabolical machinery whatever to account for your marvellous ink-drop! As for poor, good, simple Mrs. Fairhead, I wish you joy of her, if she is to be your arch-conspirator! Be advised by me, you nervous, unreasoning child, and banish all this nonsense from your mind. I declare, I thought you had more sense, and less German romance, in your dear little head!"

Silenced, but only half convinced, I gave up the point, and said no more about it.

"You do love your little Barbarina, ev[illegible]

though you think her a goose, don't you, Hugh?" I said, presently.

"Love you, my darling! It is all I live to do."

"I believe it."

He was kneeling beside my chair; and I took his great shaggy head in my two hands, and kissed him on the forehead.

"Now may I go and shoot some pheasants?" asked he, with mock humility.

"Yes; and be sure you come and fetch me home at five o'clock, sir."

"Thy servant hears; and to hear is to obey."

I watched him go forth with his gun and his dogs, active and athletic as a prairie hunter. As he crossed the courtyard, he turned and waved his hat to me. That gesture, and the smile by which it was accompanied, stayed by me all the day and made me happy. I knew that he loved me; and I knew that I loved him, and trusted him, perfectly.